



A FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE FUTURE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT



Prepared for
**City of Grand Rapids
Downtown Development Authority**

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In Association with
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objectives

In the latter half of 2010, the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority commissioned a participatory community visioning and priority-setting process to develop a Framework Plan for downtown. The primary objectives of the Framework Plan included:

- Develop a compelling vision for downtown.
- Inventory and frame our ideas and aspirations.
- Build leadership and consensus around common goals.
- Establish priorities to ensure that DDA investments are strategic.



Accomplishments of the Framework Plan

The Framework Plan presents an updated market-based vision for downtown, and, perhaps more importantly, provides a new construct for guiding DDA investments, decision-making and organizational structure. Key accomplishments of the Framework Plan include the following:

- More than 1,400 downtown stakeholders and Grand Rapids residents participated in the Plan development process, either through a Working Group, Open House or online survey.
- The Plan balances the aspirations of the community with the economic realities of 2011, resulting in proposed initiatives that are doable and prepare downtown for the next investment cycle.
- A new operating construct for the DDA sorts actions, resource allocation decisions and operating practices into three functional areas that together create a vital downtown: Economy, Environment and Experience.
- Short-term investment priorities are recommended to support downtown retail and create an environment that fosters creative and innovative small business ventures.
- Public realm improvements emphasize improvements to the Grand River, connectivity within downtown and to adjacent neighborhoods, and a focus on complete streets that promote walking and biking.
- A physical framework to help direct DDA investment identifies activity centers, focus areas and key connections to strengthen downtown.
- An operational business plan creates a more inclusive, entrepreneurial and pro-active DDA.

“The Framework Plan facilitates downtown’s transformation from a one-dimensional business center to a multi-dimensional neighborhood with a lively mix of uses woven together by pedestrian-friendly streets connected to adjacent neighborhoods and the Grand River”



Framework Open House – November 2010

The Framework Process

Through the fall of 2010, more than 1,400 downtown and community stakeholders participated in the Framework planning process in either a Working Group, Open House or online survey.

Each step of the outreach process was designed to seek elements of a community-based vision for downtown, plus establish priorities for improvements and initiatives.

Consistent Themes: From the community outreach process, consistent themes to improve Downtown Grand Rapids included the following:

- Improving downtown retail and filling vacant storefronts emerged as a top concern from all participants, including Working Groups, Open Houses and the online survey.
- Activating the Grand River is also a top community priority for downtown, including trails and development opportunities on its banks, introducing rapids within, and connecting Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to it.
- A more walkable Downtown with alternatives to vehicles, including transit and bikes, was favored by many participants.
- Viewing downtown as a “neighborhood”, with more residential, dining, retail and services, and woven together by pedestrian-friendly streets that connect to the river and adjacent neighborhoods, emerged as a common theme.

Market Indicators

To balance community aspirations revealed by the outreach process, the Framework consultant team undertook an assessment of existing economic conditions. Key market indicators included the following:

- Downtown has a growing residential base, and per capita income is higher than the rest of the city.
- 36,000 employees and 31,000 students
- Downtown housing occupancies and rental rates are the highest in the city.
- In October 2010, downtown had one foreclosure out of the city’s reported 1,719.
- Public safety is an issue along the Division corridor south of Fulton.

Top Downtown Visitor Attractions

Cultural Facility/ Attraction	Annual Visitor Attendance
Van Andel Arena	567,846
DeVos Place	561,580
Public Library	490,103
Public Museum	265,068
Children’s Museum	160,700
Art Museum	138,846
Ford Museum	116,074
Institute for Contemporary Arts	114,396

The Framework Action Plan

Balancing community aspirations (i.e. results of Framework Plan outreach) with market realities (i.e. results of Downtown Grand Rapids market profile and global trends), we see a two to three year window for Downtown Grand Rapids to prepare for the next cycle of investment. Demographic and lifestyle trends that were making downtown a more desirable destination for living, dining and entertainment have not abated, but have been stalled due to the economic recession. As the economy improves, credit markets recover, and households regain their sense of financial mobility, there will be pent-up demand that will create opportunities for new investment.



The Framework Plan lays out both near-term (i.e. next three years) and mid-term (i.e. three to seven years) priorities and policies for the DDA to prepare for and maximize this opportunity. In the near-term, a variety of modest improvements, plans and small business development initiatives are recommended to strengthen downtown's fundamentals. These near-term improvements are viewed as setting the stage for mixed-use infill development that is likely to occur as the overall economy improves. Given that much of downtown's historic building stock has already been redeveloped, the next cycle of development will need to fill gaps and opportunity sites with new construction and investment.

Elements of a Vital Downtown Grand Rapids – THE VISION

Prosperous: *A vibrant city that attracts jobs, growth and investment*

Livable: *A downtown that is safe, clean and inviting*

Walkable: *A city that is easy and safe for pedestrians to navigate*

Inclusive: *A socially and economically diverse city*

Green: *A city that embraces outdoor recreation and promotes a culture of environmental sustainability*

Connected: *A downtown that is intuitive for pedestrians, easy to get around and connected to adjacent neighborhoods*

Distinctive: *A city with unique character and flair*

The Framework

To achieve the vision for downtown, the resulting Framework sorts programs and allocates resources into three inter-dependent programs. This Framework – Economy, Environment and Experience – also provides the basis for implementation and recommended revisions to the DDA’s budget and organizational structures.

A: Economy <i>A prosperous downtown</i>	B: Environment <i>A comfortable and enjoyable place where people want to be</i>	C: Experience <i>Unique places, spaces, events and culture</i>
A1 - Thriving Retail	B1 – River Activation	C1 – Clean & Safe
A2- Community Venture & Innovation	B2 – Accessibility and Connections	C2 - Arts & Culture
A3 – Residential and Mixed Use Development	B3- Infrastructure & Streetscape	C3 – Events & Programming

Recommended program highlights from the Framework include the following:



Economy

In the near term, economic development recommendations aim to strengthen and grow downtown retail, with an emphasis on local independent businesses. Creating an environment that fosters innovation and creativity, and captures Grand Rapid’s downtown colleges and active millennial population, is a key objective of the Framework.

Specific recommendations include:

Retail Support

- Support local independent retail and create district incubators along downtown’s key retail corridors.
- Conduct a retail merchandising plan to determine where retail concepts are most likely to succeed.
- Enhance public safety along south Division Street to improve the area’s commercial viability.

Community Ventures & Innovation

- Partner with Grand Rapid’s philanthropic organizations to create a Community Venture Fund that provides equity and loans for innovative and creative downtown businesses.

Downtown Housing & Mixed-Use Development

- Incent mixed-use projects and support new amenities that make downtown a more desirable place to live, work, visit and recreate.

Environment

Environment refers to improvements to downtown's public realm, with a focus on supporting amenities and connections that enhance the overall quality of life downtown.

Recommended investments include:

Grand River Activation

- Strategic investments to activate the Grand River and integrate it into the fabric of downtown. Options include trails, joint development sites, public facilities and rapids.

Accessibility and Connections

- Support the designation and improvement of several "complete streets" that run through the downtown. Complete streets principles accommodate mobility beyond automobiles, including options for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Conduct a downtown circulation and parking plan to identify streets for two-way conversion, implement Complete Streets principles and to develop a strategy for best managing parking for the present and future.
- Promote downtown as the hub of the regional transit system, including support for BRT and streetcar.

Streetscape and Infrastructure

- Promote downtown walkability through future streetscape investments, traffic calming and greening.



Experience

Downtown Grand Rapids enjoys an abundance of successful special events and cultural institutions that make downtown fun, diverse and unique. The Framework Plan recommends that the DDA work with its civic partners to support the overall downtown experience through strategic investments in public safety, marketing and events.

Specific recommendations include:

Clean and Safe

- A clean and safe environment is fundamental to making downtown welcoming. Enhancements to city and BID efforts to keep downtown safe are recommended, with a focus on the south Division corridor.

Arts and Culture

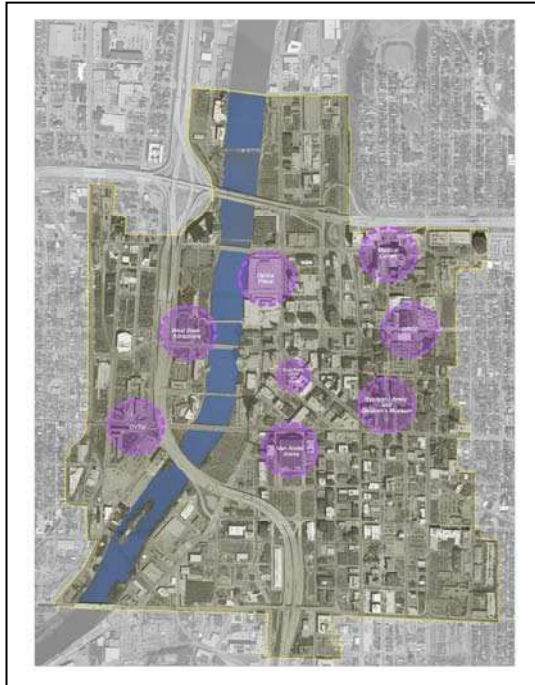
- Support destination marketing efforts that aim to attract regional consumers to downtown.

Events and Programming

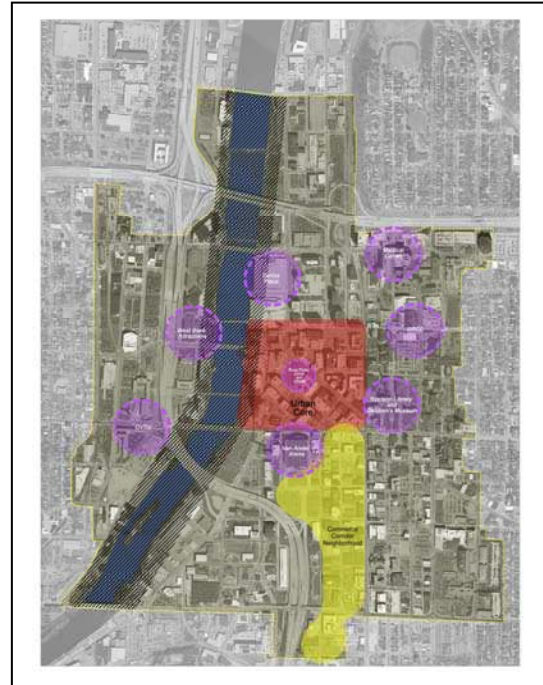
- Support special events and programming that celebrate Grand Rapids' diversity and entrepreneurial spirit.

The Physical Framework

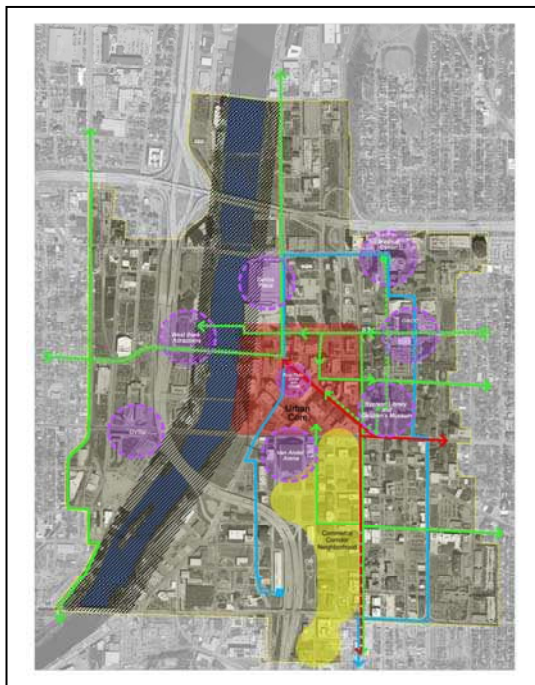
To help direct DDA investment to priority geographic areas, a physical framework has been developed that starts with capitalizing on energy from downtown's major activity centers (i.e. anchor destinations), introduces three focus areas that connect to and receive energy from the activity centers (i.e. urban core, Commerce Street neighborhood and the Grand River) and identifies key connections in the form of retail streets, complete streets and transit.



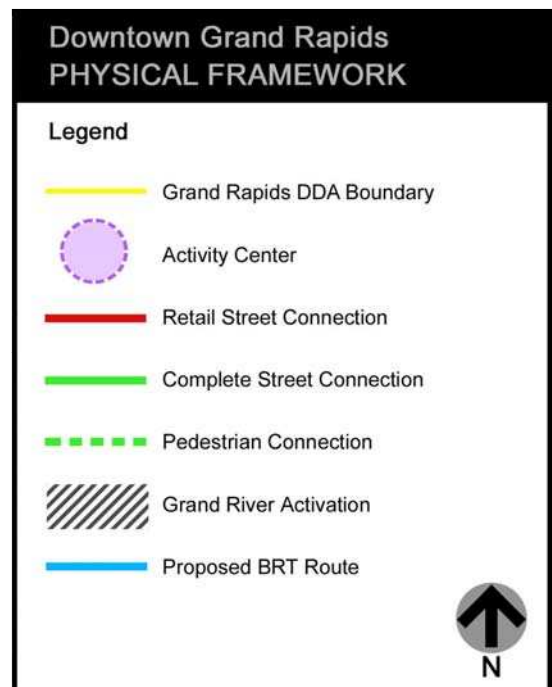
Downtown Activity Centers



Activity Centers + Focus Areas



**Activity Centers + Focus Areas
+ Connections**



Implementation

Immediate Investment Priorities
Establish Retail Incubator Districts
Conduct a Merchandising Plan
Establish a Community Venture Fund
Grand River Improvements
Install Bike Racks/Lockers
Conduct Circulation/Parking Plan
Safety Improvements Along Division
<i>Suggested Year One Investments Resulting from the Framework</i>

Implications for the DDA

To implement the Framework Plan, several immediate recommendations are offered for the DDA, including:

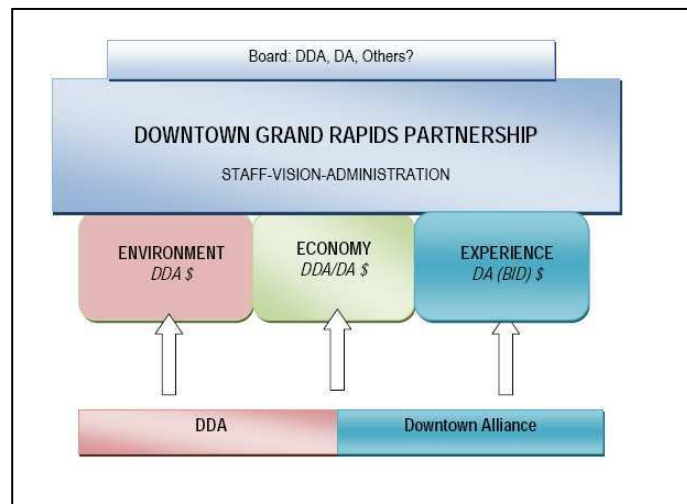
- DDA Action Groups:** An “action group” is recommended to monitor progress and deliberate the merits of investments within each of the Framework program areas, Economy, Environment and Experience. Each Action Group would be chaired by a DDA board member and include representation from partner organizations such as the Downtown Alliance, City of Grand Rapids and others.
- Budget:** The DDA operational and investment budget should be re-organized to correspond with the recommended three program areas of Economy, Environment and Experience. Recommended Year One investments resulting from the Framework are illustrated above.
- Investment Filter:** In addition to the preceding pro-active investments, it is anticipated that the DDA will continue to consider requests for funding on a case-by case basis. The following criteria are suggested as a filter for considering funding requests:
 - ✓ Is the investment consistent with and will help to advance the Vision for downtown’s future?
 - ✓ Does the investment fit within a functional funding area (i.e. economy, environment, experience)?
 - ✓ Does the investment strengthen the physical framework within a focus area and/or connection?
 - ✓ If not, does the investment offer a compelling opportunity and/or investment catalyst for downtown?
 - ✓ Does the investment offer financial leveraging by bringing substantial non-DDA resources to bear?

Organizational Strategy:

Downtown Grand Rapids Partnership

Borrowing from best practices in other cities, a downtown “holding company” structure is recommended to advance the near and long-term development and management of Downtown Grand Rapids. Initially combining the DDA and the Downtown Alliance under one organizational umbrella, advantages of the holding company concept include:

- Coordinate and leverage TIF and BID funds
- Create a more entrepreneurial approach to downtown development, marketing and management
- Achieve cost efficiencies by combining staffing and administration within one organizational umbrella
- Eliminate the confusion and perceived duplication of multiple downtown agencies
- Develop a unified and more influential public/private partnership



THE VISION FOR A VITAL DOWNTOWN

PROSPEROUS ■ LIVABLE ■ WALKABLE ■ INCLUSIVE ■ GREEN ■ CONNECTED ■ DISTINCTIVE



ECONOMY

A prosperous downtown

Thriving Retail

Community Venture
and Innovation

Residential and Mixed
Use Development



ENVIRONMENT

A comfortable and enjoyable
place where people want to be

River Activation

Accessibility and
Connections

Infrastructure and
Streetscape



EXPERIENCE

Unique places, spaces,
events and culture

Clean and Safe

Arts and Culture

Events and
Programming

ACTIVITY CENTERS



Several key downtown activity centers each generate approximately 500,000 visitors per year. The energy and vitality from those activity centers provide the key building blocks for downtown's investment strategy.

FOCUS AREAS



Three primary focus areas that connect to and receive energy from the major activity centers:

- Monroe Center
- Ionia/Commerce Corridor
- Grand River

CONNECTIONS



Key connections and transit are added to the physical framework, providing linkages from adjacent neighborhoods to and throughout downtown while improving walkability and mobility.

FRAMING THE FUTURE: DDA 2011 PLAN

ACTION PLAN

Action Plan Introduction

Grand Rapids has the potential to build one of the most vibrant downtowns of any mid-sized American city. We have all the essential assets, including a strong legacy of collaborative civic reinvestment and an emerging generation of enthusiastic young people who genuinely care about downtown. The Framework Plan aims to capitalize on these unique dynamics and strategically direct the DDA's near-term investment into targeted improvements, amenities and programs that enhance downtown's overall competitiveness and quality of life.

Balancing community aspirations (i.e. results of Framework Plan outreach) with market realities (i.e. results of Downtown Grand Rapids market profile and global trends), we see a two to three year window for Downtown Grand Rapids to prepare for the next cycle of investment. Demographic and lifestyle trends that were making downtown a more desirable destination for living, dining and entertainment have not abated, but have been stalled due to the economic recession. As the economy improves, credit markets recover, and households regain their sense of financial mobility, there will be pent-up demand that will create opportunities for new investment.

The Framework Plan lays out both near-term (i.e. next three years) and mid-term (i.e. three to seven years) priorities and policies for the DDA to prepare for and maximize this opportunity. In the near-term, a variety of modest improvements, plans and small business development initiatives are recommended to strengthen downtown's fundamentals. These near-term improvements are viewed as setting the stage for mixed-use infill development that is likely to occur as the overall economy improves. Given that much of downtown's historic building stock has already been redeveloped, the next cycle of development will need to fill gaps and opportunity sites with new construction and investment.

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Distinctive: A city with unique character and flair

DDA Plan Framework

The following Framework becomes the organizing structure for the DDA's programs, investments and organizational structure.

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A. ECONOMY

Grand Rapids, like the rest of the country, is experiencing a challenging economic period. City-wide revenues are down, unemployment is high, public services have been reduced and investment in downtown has leveled. However, Grand Rapids has a remarkable tradition of philanthropic giving, robust public/private partnerships and a strong understanding that the region's economic health is closely tied to downtown. Strengthening downtown's economic health is the cornerstone of this planning effort. Recommended initiatives are outlined below.

A1. Thriving Retail

- **Goal:** Improve Downtown's overall economic vitality by enhancing and diversifying retail.
- **Why It's Important:** Improving retail consistently emerged as a top stakeholder priority during the outreach process. A more robust retail mix will provide a more diverse and thriving economic base that will ultimately support more residential and mixed use development downtown.

The near-term retail strategy (i.e. next one to three years) is to strengthen Downtown's fundamentals, concentrating energy and resources in geographic areas that are most accommodating for retail. Supporting retail downtown through targeted investment, incentives, and regulatory policies will build upon the inherent strengths of specific downtown nodes and that vitality will continue to spread to other parts of downtown. Primary areas of investment include:

- Monroe Center:** Downtown's urban core. The geographic center of downtown where residential, employment and retail sectors combine to create a vibrant and central downtown neighborhood. Monroe (*Bounded by Lyon Street to the north, Division Avenue to the east, Fulton Street to the south and Monroe Ave to the west.*)
- South Division:** The innovative and edgy retail corridor at the core of the Heartside District, where dozens of buildings have been renovated for offices, housing, artists' lofts and restaurants (*between Cherry and Monroe Center*).
- East Fulton:** A downtown gateway and an extension of Monroe and Division with pioneering retail opportunities (*between South Division and Jefferson*).

- d. ***Ionia/Commerce Corridor:*** Bounded by the urban core area of Monroe Center, the highway, South Division retail corridor and the planned public market, Downtown's most densely populated neighborhood supports retail, services and is the region's primary sports and entertainment destination. *(Bounded by Fulton Street to the north, Division Avenue to the east, Wealthy Street to the south and the highway to the west.)*

These four focus areas collectively create the nexus of a near-term investment strategy for downtown. Integrating the activity generators around these core areas, including the library (490,000 annual visits) and the Children's Museum (161,000 annual visits), the DeVos Center (561,000 annual visits), the Van Andel Arena (567,000 annual visits), the Grand Rapids Art Museum (140,000 annual visits) and the Public and Gerald Ford Museums (combined generate almost 400,000 visits) strengthen downtown retail and investment potential tremendously.

The DDA can play a key role through proactively guiding, managing and supporting existing retail through investment and small business assistance.

→ **Strategies:**

1. Focus on growing, attracting and incubating local independent retail concepts. In order to most effectively to support retail, the DDA should develop a small business support program (in cooperation with the SBDTC, Chamber and/or any other appropriate organizations) to offer technical assistance and business support in areas that might include:
 - a. Market information
 - b. Merchandising and window display assistance
 - c. Investor marketing
 - d. Business planning
 - e. Partnerships with the downtown colleges, medical centers, the West Michigan Strategic Alliance and others to create partnerships and link students to jobs and internships.

The small business support program should incorporate corridor and/or district-specific incubators that reinforce desired business and retail mix and support the DDA's overall retail and merchandising strategies. Monroe Center, South Division and East Fulton can become designated retail incubator districts. Michigan law allows DDA's to manage and invest in business incubator districts. As a designated incubator, new and existing businesses could benefit from an array of business support resources and services including access to capital, rent subsidies and technical assistance services such as those outlined above.

2. Commission a retail merchandising plan to identify strategies to strengthen the existing mix and attract the best array of new retail. The merchandising plan would also provide guidance on where to cluster complementary types of retail and determine the feasibility and optimal location(s) to house any national franchise and/or brands that are entering the Grand Rapids market.
3. Fill empty storefronts with temporary art installations, pop-up stores or other uses to keep vacant storefronts active and lit, "eyes on the street", and create a more appealing retail destination. Consider a partnership with the Arts Council of Grand Rapids and/or Avenue for the Arts to include more public art installations and art-related activities downtown.
4. Actively address concerns regarding the level of criminal activity along the Division Corridor (south of Fulton) and in public parks. A variety of influences are contributing to the problem, including a concentration of social services on Division and night clubs on Iona. The new park at Cherry and Division has become a magnet for loitering and criminal activities and, in its current state, is an impediment to business development. Similar problems exist to

some extent at Heartside and Veteran's Parks. Reclaiming the environment and changing the public's perception about the area through an aggressive public safety strategy is critical to its continued economic development. Strategies include:

- a. Working collaboratively with the Grand Rapids Police Department and the service providers in the area to develop strategies to reduce and ultimately eliminate unacceptable behaviors.
- b. Consider hiring a social worker to proactively and positively address issues negatively affecting the area.
- c. Redesign the park to discourage loitering and criminal behavior.
- d. Install mobile video cameras that are monitored by police.

A2. Community Ventures & Innovation:

- **Goal:** Provide the necessary capital and technical assistance to strengthen existing and attract new businesses. Build upon the creative culture of Grand Rapids by encouraging innovative business concepts; strive to keep young talent in Grand Rapids, proactively support diverse business concepts, and create jobs. "Innovative" businesses can include unique retail and restaurant concepts, and new businesses and services that are more suitable to office and light industrial space. Create jobs in growing sectors of the economy and strengthen downtown's role as an employment center.
- **Why It's Important:** Innovative businesses are critical for downtown's growth, economic vitality and attracting and keeping a talented workforce. Leverage the immense investment in downtown already made by the DDA and the philanthropic community.
- **Strategies:**
1. Create a Community Venture Fund to support retail, restaurant, innovative businesses, office development and light manufacturing. A Community Venture Fund could be supported by the philanthropic community and other community organizations interested in investing in specific types of downtown projects. The Community Venture Fund could invest in downtown businesses in several ways including:
 - a. Providing working capital for innovative and diverse business concepts.
 - b. Funding for tenant finish and other property improvements.
 - c. Contract or lease relief for businesses that provide needed or desirable services.
 - d. Partnering with the DDA to provide incentives for code compliance, façade improvements, and other necessary building enhancements.
 2. Building upon Grand Rapids' history of manufacturing and design, consider providing incentives for light manufacturing and craft production on upper floors in underutilized buildings. Reward innovation and job creation.
 3. Acknowledge the economic and social significance of downtown's local student population and seek to integrate them meaningfully in downtown as consumers, residents and workers. Develop strategies to boost retention of students in downtown after they graduate. (Look at *Campus Philly*, a Philadelphia non-profit organization, as a potential model for Grand Rapids.)

A3. Downtown Housing and Mixed Use Development

- **Goal:** Expand housing options to broaden the array of household types and income levels in downtown, and provide amenities for a wide range of people. Support infill mixed-use development opportunities that encompass a variety of uses such as, residential, office, studios, live/work as well as retail and entertainment.
 - **Why It's Important:** Housing that is designed and priced to meet the needs of those groups who are increasingly looking for downtown housing options, particularly *millennials* and *baby boomers*, will attract more downtown residents. Eventually, a significant downtown population will help increase the demand for retail and neighborhood services. Mixed use development that encompasses office, studios, student housing, live/work as well as retail at the ground floor will activate downtown streets and diversify infill development opportunities as the market rebounds and demand increases.
 - **Strategies:** Current market conditions favor multi-family rental (perhaps with the flexibility to convert to condominiums if and when the market conditions allow). Nationwide, increasing numbers of young adults are now entering prime apartment renting age (20s to early 30s before raising families). More of their empty-nest, baby boomer parents also look to downsize and gain the greater convenience of living closer to urban amenities — shopping, entertainment and cultural districts. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a great deal of pent-up demand for downtown Grand Rapids housing that will be realized as housing outside of the downtown area can be sold at higher prices than current market conditions dictate. If developers can prepare for that demand now through providing more supply at the right price points, downtown will be poised to capture demand as it increases. Mixed-use, infill development should be encouraged throughout downtown.
1. The DDA has been and should continue to be the catalyst to ensure direct investment in housing and mixed-use development. By working closely with developers who understand the critical challenges in infill development the DDA should package its variety of existing incentives, grants and loans to support mixed-use development.
 2. Strengthen amenities that create a desirable and livable neighborhood, including:
 - a. Continue to focus on expanding transit opportunities such as BRT and streetcar that support urban living patterns including reduced vehicle dependence. According to recent national research, owning one less car provides the typical household the financial capacity to absorb an additional \$100,000 in home price – in other words, the savings realized from less car-related expenses can be transferred directly to a higher mortgage payment, thereby indirectly reducing the cost of downtown housing.
 - b. Conducting a downtown grocery feasibility analysis to determine whether a food co-op or alternative approach for downtown might work in the near-term. Assess how the planned public market will affect need for grocery and/or influence downtown living.
 - c. Partnering with schools to determine if there is a strategic approach to providing quality K-12 education for downtown residents.
 - d. Providing space for active urban living such as dog parks, roof-top and community gardens.
 - e. Activating and accessing the river.
 - f. Ensuring that the pedestrian realm is complete, sidewalks are maintained, accessible and in good condition, and traffic is calmed to encourage safe pedestrian mobility.

3. Parking remains a perceptual challenge for Downtown as evidenced by the consumer responses to the Framework Plan consumer survey. A parking management study can determine utilization rates, marketing strategies that outline consistent messaging for public and private lots, strategies to replace existing parking supply as surface lots are redeveloped and any other issues that need thorough analysis. Other parking issues to be examined include:
 - a. Improving wayfinding and signage of parking facilities.
 - b. Technology improvements to make on-street parking more convenient (i.e. “smart meters” that allow for credit card payments, flexible hours and pricing).
 - c. Designate “visitor parking” areas in all structured public parking.

B. ENVIRONMENT

As downtown continues to be transformed from the traditional center of business and commerce to a multi-dimensional neighborhood striving to be pedestrian, transit and bike-friendly, the DDA is poised to focus its resources to support the physical amenities and connections that improve the overall quality of life for everyone who lives, works and visits downtown.

B1. Grand River Activation

- **Goal:** Make strategic investments to create a cohesive and active river, trails and connections.
- **Why It’s Important:** The river is the most important natural amenity in the city and is significantly underutilized. The outreach process revealed tremendous community-wide enthusiasm for being able to use the river for more recreation, outdoor access and fun. Activating the river and connecting it well to downtown, parks, trails and neighborhoods will enhance the overall downtown experience while encouraging more downtown investment, development and recreation.
- **Strategies:**
 1. Much of the work toward activating the Grand River has already been done. Several plans have been written addressing different aspects of activating the river including:
 - a. *Green Grand Rapids (in progress)* including:
 - *Grand River Whitewater Park preferred Alternative*
 - *Green Grand Rapids Special Study: Riverwalk Extension*
 - b. *Whitewater Feasibility Study (in progress)*
 - c. *Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines (pp. 45-47, 2006)*
 - d. *City of Grand Rapids Master Plan (ch. 7, 2002)*
 - e. *Grand River Edges (1980)*

A comprehensive review of efforts should be undertaken to bring together the salient parts of previous plans in a River Master Plan for 2011. In addition to building upon past studies, a Master Plan should address:

- a. Comprehensive land use recommendations along the banks of the river.
- b. Identify opportunity sites along the river.
- c. Activating buildings that either have their back to the river or have monolithic walls or elements that detract from a sense of place, safety and transparency.
- d. Appropriate setbacks along the river edge.

2. Determine a phased investment approach and investment criteria that can include some or all of the following short-term recommendations:
 - a. Evaluation of a downtown kayak “rapids” course and its implementation.
 - b. Develop riverwalk design guidelines.
 - c. Encourage development of vacant and underutilized parcels.
 - d. Implement downtown riverfront wayfinding (signage) plan.
 - e. Ensure trails and connections are developed consistently as private land owners redevelop sites along the river.
 - f. Explore the creation a riverfront focused non-profit organization to finance riverwalk development, amenities and accompanying programming and maintenance.
 - g. Other initiatives and investment as appropriate and desirable.

B2. Accessibility and Connections

- **Goal:** A downtown that is easy to navigate, bike and pedestrian friendly and transit rich.
- **Why It's Important:** Accessibility and connections are critical ingredients in any great city. A downtown that embraces walking, biking and transit as well as cars, creates a great urban place, enhances public safety, fosters more personal interactions, and ultimately increases economic vitality.
- **Strategies:**
1. Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure and connections between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods by designating secondary, pedestrian-friendly streets as primary pedestrian and/or bike routes. Consider Lyon, Fountain, Lake Michigan Drive and Cherry as “Complete Streets” that connect the near-in neighborhoods to downtown and to the west side of the river via the pedestrian bridges that connect to activity nodes such as museums and Grand Valley State University. Division, Monroe and Seward are complementary north/south connectors that are appropriate for complete streets.
 2. Invest in bike amenities such as bike racks and/or bike lockers throughout downtown and near transit facilities.
 3. Support the City’s efforts to complete a comprehensive, city-wide bike plan.
 4. Conduct an overall transportation circulation and parking management plan to provide a holistic overview and plan for traffic movement throughout downtown including the implementation of complete streets,, the conversion of one-way streets to two-way where possible and the possibility of reducing vehicle lanes on Division Avenue and other downtown streets. Determine how traffic movement affects parking habits, movement and availability.
 5. Promote downtown as a transit hub: reinforce downtown as the region’s largest and most convenient transit district with local, regional, statewide and national connection. Actively support efforts to create and expand existing bus service, provide investment in the current efforts to build-out BRT and moving the Amtrak station to its new location.
 6. Continue to support efforts to develop a streetcar line downtown. A streetcar can provide a local transit enhancement supported by increased residents, workers and retail.

B3. Streetscape and Infrastructure

- **Goal:** A downtown neighborhood that emphasizes quality urban design promotes walkability and reinforces Grand Rapids as a distinct place.
- **Why It's Important:** The DDA has spent a great deal of energy and resources to create streetscape and infrastructure improvements that provide a supportive backdrop for continued private investment in downtown. Leveraging previous efforts can expand the impact of downtown's healthy growth and development while expanding the neighborhood feeling of downtown.
- **Strategies:**
 1. Prepare a streetscape asset management plan. Well maintained sidewalks that are accessible create a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience. Streetscape amenities such as decorative streetlights and benches contribute to the unique downtown experience, but require periodic maintenance and repairs at a higher level than currently provided. Prioritize investment in areas that have the most pedestrian traffic and/or support downtown entertainment and retail.
 2. Implement traffic calming measures, more designated pedestrian crossings with lights and pavements treatments to create a greater awareness of pedestrian activity downtown. Traffic speeds that are too fast are unsafe, detract from a sense of safety and can be a business district liability.
 3. Plant more street trees and natural landscapes where appropriate. Implement streetscape guidelines that reinforce an enhanced pedestrian environment.

C. EXPERIENCE

Grand Rapids has an abundance of successful events, venues and accompanying amenities. Strategies that reinforce a positive downtown experience and market downtown as a regional destination should continue to be explored. The downtown experience should continue to be managed primarily by the Downtown Alliance with a stronger collaborative partnership between the Alliance and the DDA to make strategic investments in downtown safety, marketing and maintenance.

C1. Clean and Safe

- **Goal:** Create an environment that feels safe and welcoming to all, and encourages new investment, visitors and development.
- **Why It's Important:** A clean and safe environment is arguably the most critical underpinning of a healthy downtown. If people do not feel safe and if downtown is not well maintained, people will not shop, visit or choose to live there. Ensuring downtown is welcoming will encourage more investment and activity.
- **Strategies:**

As noted in the Thriving Retail discussion (item A1.4) safety is a critical foundation to the success of any commercial environment. According to Grand Rapids police data, there is significant criminal activity centered along the South Division corridor south of Fulton Street. The DDA and the Downtown Alliance should work closely together to ensure appropriate police presence downtown, with an emphasis on deterring criminal activity on Division south of Fulton.

1. Initiate a dialog between social service agencies and the police department to determine near-term solutions to alleviate loitering and criminal behavior.
2. Investigate collaborative DDA/Downtown Alliance investment in resources such as a social worker, more lighting and/or security cameras.
3. Redesign the park at Cherry to discourage loitering and crime.
4. Work with the police department to audit public spaces to identify and remedy areas that encourage crime through poor lighting or design.
5. Develop a strategy for balanced distribution of social service providers throughout Grand Rapids.

C2. Arts and Culture

- **Goal:** Promote the diverse and sophisticated array of arts and cultural amenities that downtown boasts.
- **Why It's Important:** Downtown arts and cultural venues collectively generate more than 2 million annual visits and have tremendous market potential. The demographic groups that favor downtown living tend to be attracted to arts and cultural venues.
- **Strategies:**
 1. Promote and market downtown as a regional cultural destination.
 2. Develop collaborative marketing strategies to encourage arts patrons to shop, dine and stay downtown after events.
 3. Recruit shows, events and programming that appeal to the diverse population in Grand Rapids.

C3. Events & Programming

- **Goal:** Build upon the tremendous strength of existing events and continue to add new programs to downtown's repertoire.
- **Why It's Important:** Grand Rapids is quickly becoming nationally known as an innovative and creative center of unique events; the entrepreneurial nature of downtown events reinforces the artistic and creative attraction of Grand Rapids.
- **Strategies:**
 1. Continue to support ArtPrize and other creative events that enliven and activate downtown.
 2. Work with the Arena District, "Welcoming Downtown", downtown colleges, Downtown Alliance and others to ensure events continue to recognize and celebrate the diversity of Grand Rapids.
 3. Utilize Grand Rapids' growing reputation for innovative and collaborative events to market Grand Rapids as a center of innovation.

The Physical Framework for Downtown

The Framework Plan recommends that the DDA concentrate its energy and resources on shoring up Downtown's fundamentals to prepare for the next economic cycle. To help direct DDA investment, a physical framework has been developed based upon the following key elements:

The physical framework starts with Downtown's major activity centers:

- **Existing Activity Centers:** Downtown Grand Rapids has several activity centers that currently generate in excess of or nearly 500,000 visitors per year. These major activity centers include:
- Van Andel Arena (568,000 visitors)
 - DeVos Place (562,000 visitors)
 - Grand Rapids Public Library (490,000 visitors) and Children's Museum (161,000 visitors)
 - The Grand Rapids Art Museum (140,000 visitors) along with Rosa Parks Circle
 - The Medical District and Grand Rapids Community College
 - West Bank Attractions – Ford and Public Museums (400,000 visitors)
 - Grand Valley State University

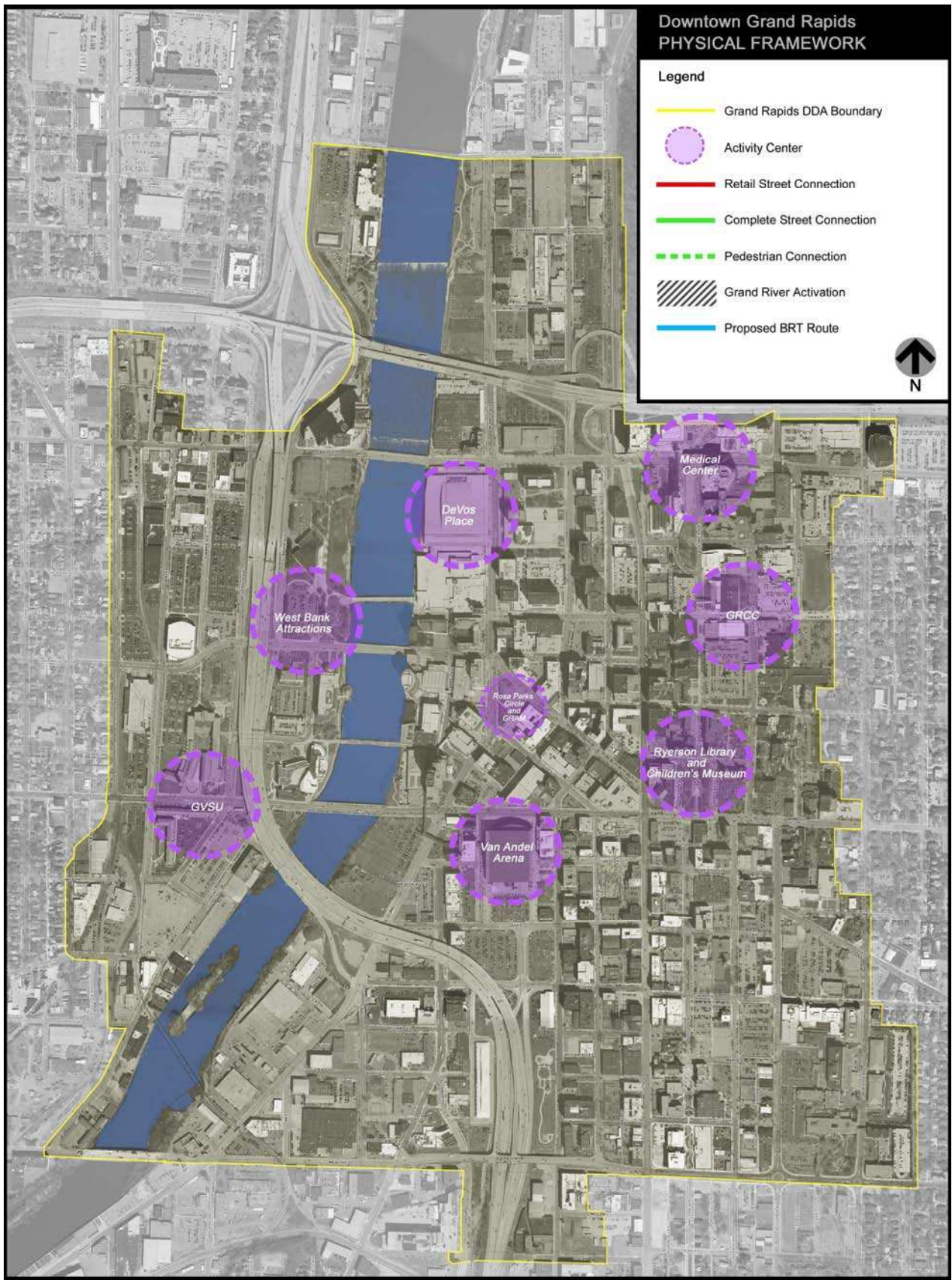
Three primary focus areas that connect to and receive energy from the major activity centers are added to the physical framework:

- **Monroe Center – The Urban Core:** Located in the geographic center of the preceding activity centers is the historic commercial core of Grand Rapids, bisected by Monroe Center and bounded roughly by Lyon, Division, Fulton Streets and the Grand River. This area becomes the focal point of economic activity for downtown and a priority for concentrating investment, particularly efforts to strengthen ground floor dining, entertainment and retail.
- **Ionia/Commerce Corridor:** To the south of Monroe Center lies the Ionia/Commerce Corridor, an area that has seen a strong wave of investment during the past ten years. Ionia becomes the primary street of Downtown's highest concentration of residential development. Continued investment here, particularly in residential and mixed-use concepts, solidifies this area and prepares it for the next wave of residential-driven investment.
- **River Activation:** The Grand River becomes a focus of opportunity. In the near-term, it is recommended that development sites and recreational enhancements be identified and prioritized. In anticipation of the River becoming a stronger amenity, pedestrian and bicycle connections from downtown and adjacent neighborhoods are identified.

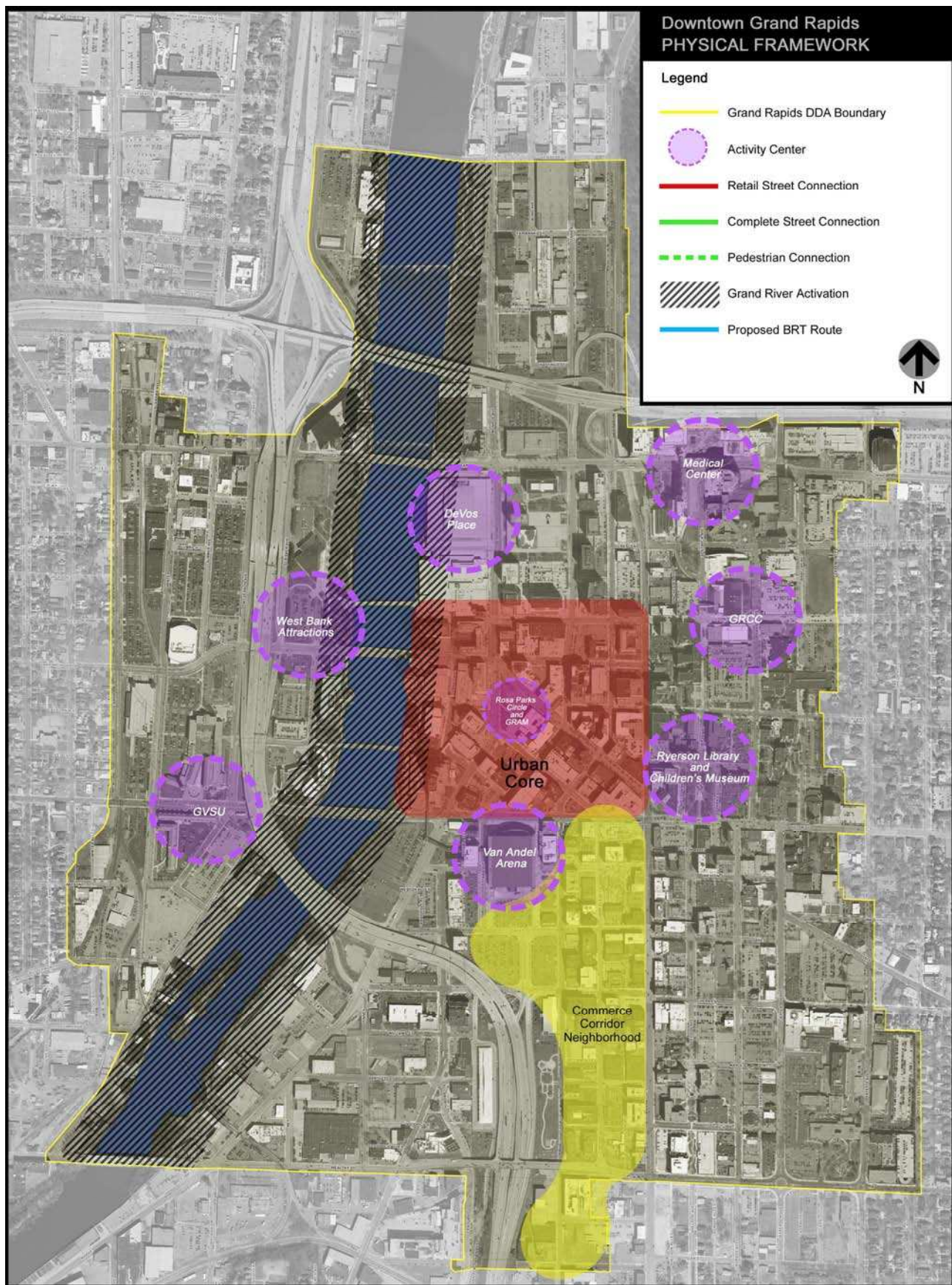
Key connections in the form of retail streets, complete streets and transit are added to the physical framework, providing the linkages from adjacent neighborhoods to downtown, and improving the overall walkability and mobility within downtown:

- **Monroe Center, Fulton and Division – Retail Streets:** The near-term focus for retail should be concentrated along Monroe Center, for conventional dining, entertainment and retail concepts, and South Division and East Fulton for more edgy dining, entertainment, arts and retail concepts. In the near-term, these areas are expected to accommodate new local independent concepts. Dining and entertainment should be considered as important as retail to activate storefronts and street activity because of the activity they generate. Professional services should be discouraged in ground floor spaces, particularly along Monroe Center.
- **Lyon, Fountain, Cherry, Division, Seward and Lake Michigan Drive– Complete Streets:** Key east/west and north/south streets are then identified to become primary connectors for people in a variety of modes. Complete streets allow for mobility options in addition to vehicles, including pedestrians, bicycles and transit. Lyon and Fountain (currently comprise a one-way couplet) become critical links between adjacent neighborhoods through downtown and directly to and across the river. Cherry can provide a similar function in the southern sector of downtown. Division explores a three lane alignment, introducing options for more pedestrian and bike space. Seward and Lake Michigan Drive are already being explored by the city as bike route connections to create a comprehensive bike lane network.

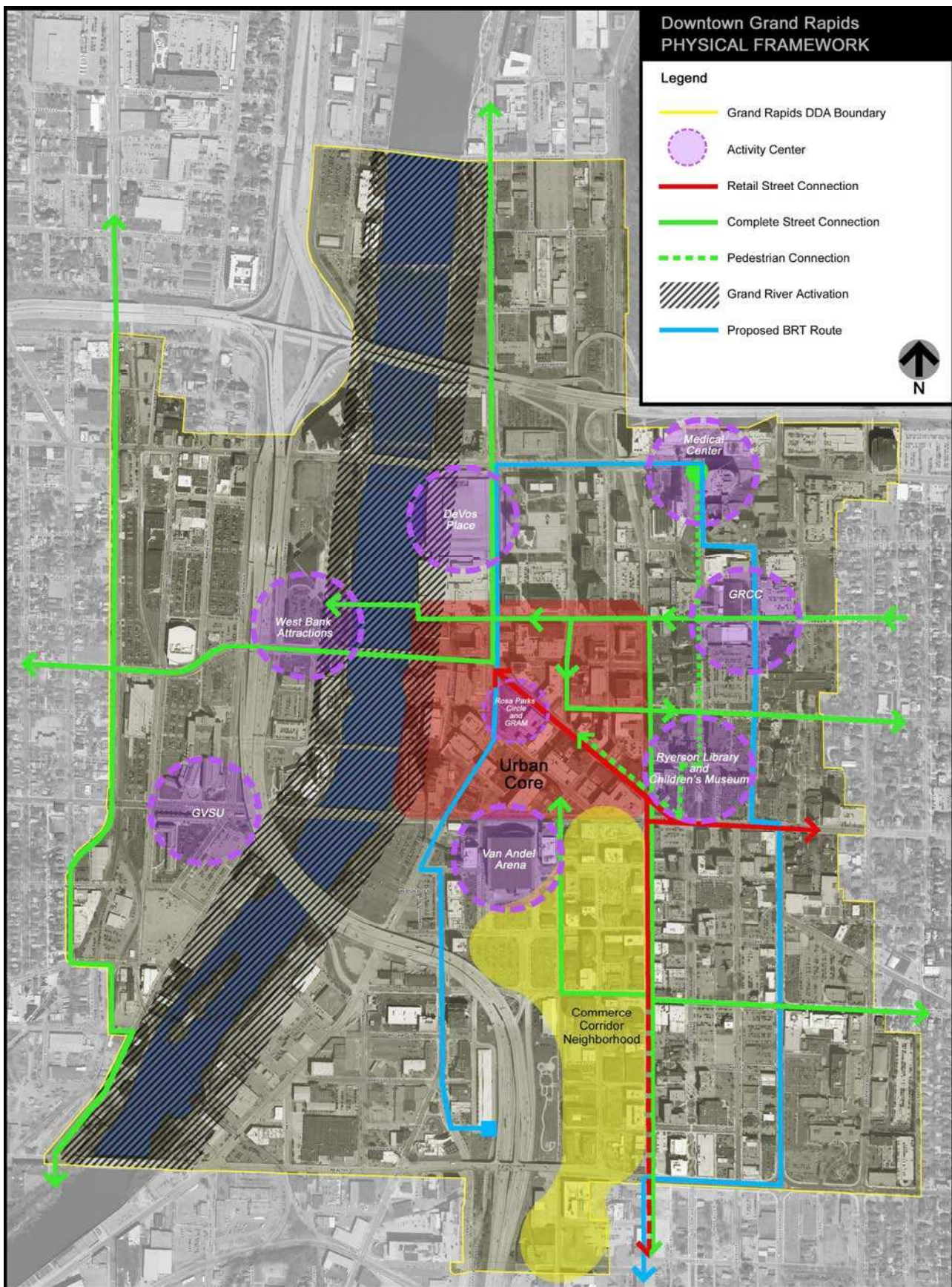
The resulting physical Framework is illustrated on the following pages:



Physical Framework Figure 1: Major Downtown Activity Centers



Physical Framework Figure 2: Activity Centers + Focus Areas



Physical Framework Figure 3: Activity Centers + Focus Areas + Connections

Plan Implementation and Phasing

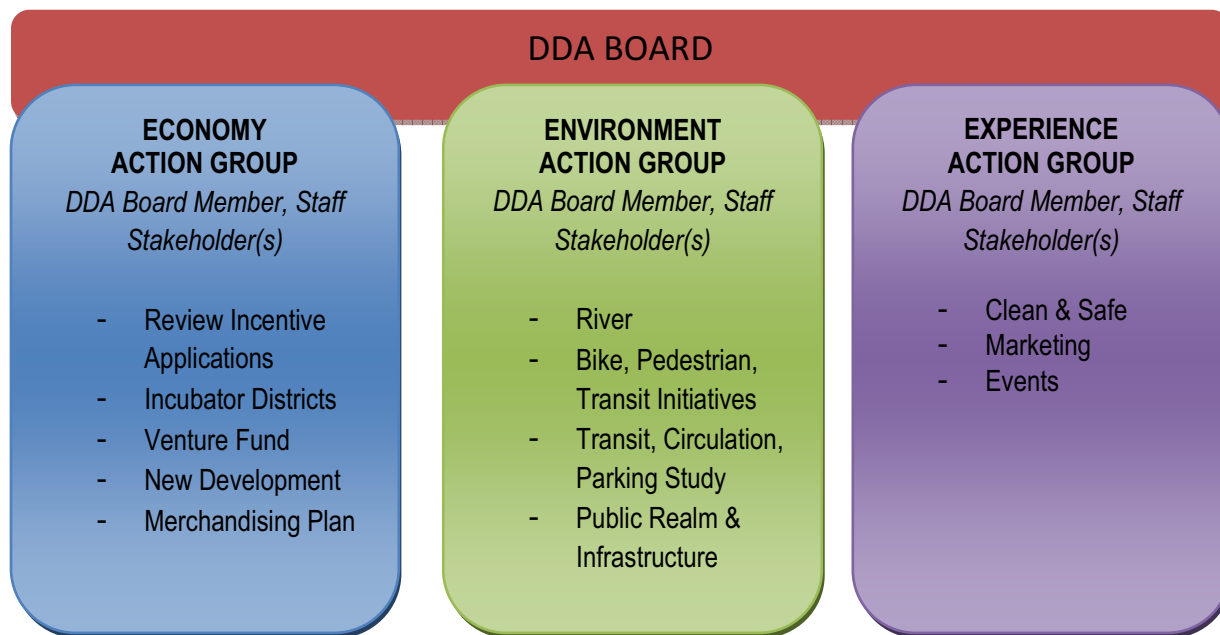
The three categories that provide the foundation of the framework plan: **Economy, Environment and Experience** are recommended to provide the implementation construct for moving this plan moving forward. The implementation construct will provide the basis for immediate applications including DDA oversight for plan implementation, budget, phasing and proposed organizational approaches.

→ DDA Action Groups:

In order to allow for consistent oversight in allocating the DDA's resources and invite civic partners to participate in the implementation of the Framework, an organizational structure that reflects the three areas of emphasis outlined in this plan is recommended. "Action Groups" organized within each of the three areas would be overseen by a DDA board member and supported by DDA staff. Other downtown stakeholders (i.e. city staff, members of the Framework Plan Steering Committee, etc.) are envisioned to participate in the Action Groups as appropriate in each functional area of the construct. The Action Group structure aims meet the following objectives:

- Encourage greater input, understanding and involvement from DDA board members in projects.
- Provide a thorough and balanced review of projects before they are placed on the monthly meeting agenda.
- Create a more consistent way to deliberate the merits of potential projects before they come before the board for consideration.
- Invite greater collaboration, participation and feedback from key downtown stakeholders and civic partners.

The Action Group structure can be illustrated as follows:



The Action Groups would meet periodically to review specific proposals or requests and make recommendations to the DDA board.

→ Budget:

To provide consistency and efficiency in plan implementation, it is recommended the DDA budget be reorganized utilizing the same three-category construct **Economy, Environment and Experience**. As new projects are reviewed and approved by the board, a reorganized budget will allow the three Action Groups to identify priorities and how the priorities fit into near-term budget allocations.

→ **Framework Phasing & Investment Filter:**

Moving forward into future budget years, the Framework provides both a set of proactive investments for the DDA to consider as well as an investment filter for evaluating funding requests. The priorities outlined below are grouped into three categories: immediate, near-term and mid-term investments. It is anticipated the immediate priorities will be undertaken in 2011. Beyond 2011, it is recommended the DDA and its Implementation Committees re-evaluate their priorities annually to determine investment priorities and how to implement them.

	ECONOMY	ENVIRONMENT	EXPERIENCE
IMMEDIATE INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2011-12	Establish Incubator Districts DDA \$150K annual appropriation to support incubator district incentives	River Improvements DDA, partners immediate investment: staff time	Safety: Lighting, video monitoring, social worker, etc. DDA/DA \$30-\$70K one-time appropriation
	Establish Venture Capital Fund DDA \$500K challenge from non-tax revenue to seed \$2.5M venture fund	Install Bike Racks/Lockers DDA \$15 to \$30K one-time appropriation	Market downtown as a regional destination DDA/DA \$200,000
	Retail Merchandising Plan DDA/DA \$50K one-time appropriation	Traffic Circulation & Parking Management Plans DDA/City \$150K one-time appropriation	New Events Fund DDA/DA/Arena District/Others Immediate investment: staff time
NEAR-TERM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES Next 3 Years	Incubator Districts DDA	Designate Living Streets Corridors DDA/City	Market downtown as a regional destination; develop collaborative marketing strategies; recruit shows, events that appeal to diverse population DDA/DA
	Participate in housing & mixed-use development; encourage diverse housing product development; focus on developing amenities that contribute to a livable neighborhood DDA, partners	Implement recommendations from Circulation and Parking Plan; promote downtown as transit hub; finalize comprehensive bike plan; pursue accessibility & connections DDA/City	Implement strategies to improve park at Cherry DDA/GR Police Department/Social Service Providers/Others
		Streetscape asset management plan; traffic calming; more street trees; streetscape guidelines DDA/City	
		Support BRT DDA/Rapid/Others	
		River Improvements DDA, partners	
MID-TERM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES Next 7 Years		Support Streetcar DDA/Rapid/Property owners/City	
		River Improvements DDA, partners	

Investment Filter: In addition to the preceding pro-active investments, it is anticipated that the DDA will continue to consider requests for funding on a case-by case basis. The following criteria are suggested as a filter for considering funding requests:

- Is the investment consistent with and help to advance the Vision for downtown's future?
- Does the investment fit within a functional funding area (i.e. economy, environment, experience)?
- Does the investment strengthen the physical framework, either within a focus area and/or connection?
- If not, does the investment offer a compelling opportunity and/or investment catalyst for downtown?
- Does the investment offer a leveraging opportunity by bringing substantial non-DDA resources to bear?

→ **Organizational Strategy: Downtown Holding Company**

A new organizational strategy is recommended to advance the near and long-term development and management of Downtown Grand Rapids. Borrowing from best practices in other cities, a downtown "holding company" structure is recommended. The holding company would combine the resources and energies of the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Alliance, and perhaps other groups that are advancing a downtown improvement agenda. Advantages of the holding company concept include:

- Coordinate and leverage the key DDA development tool of tax increment financing with the primary DA management tool of the business improvement district.
- Create a more entrepreneurial culture and approach to advance downtown development, marketing and management.
- Achieve cost efficiencies by combining the staffing and administration of the DDA and DA within one organizational umbrella.
- Eliminate the confusion and perceived duplication of multiple downtown agencies.
- Develop a unified and more influential public/private partnership to steer downtown planning and development.

Best Practices: The holding company model is one used in many downtowns throughout the country and is an efficient way to manage downtown initiatives and improvements. Three downtown organizations that that relevant to Grand Rapids were researched:

- *Center City Commission* in Memphis, Tennessee
- *Downtown Fort Worth Inc.* in Ft. Worth, TX
- *Downtown Kalamazoo Inc.* in Kalamazoo, MI

Each of the three downtown organizations utilize the holding company model and encompass both a TIF and a mil levy assessment. Activities include real estate development, small business assistance, parking management, incentive programs, clean and safe initiatives, marketing and events. Components of the comparable downtown organizations that can help to inform a new organizational structure for Downtown Grand Rapids include:

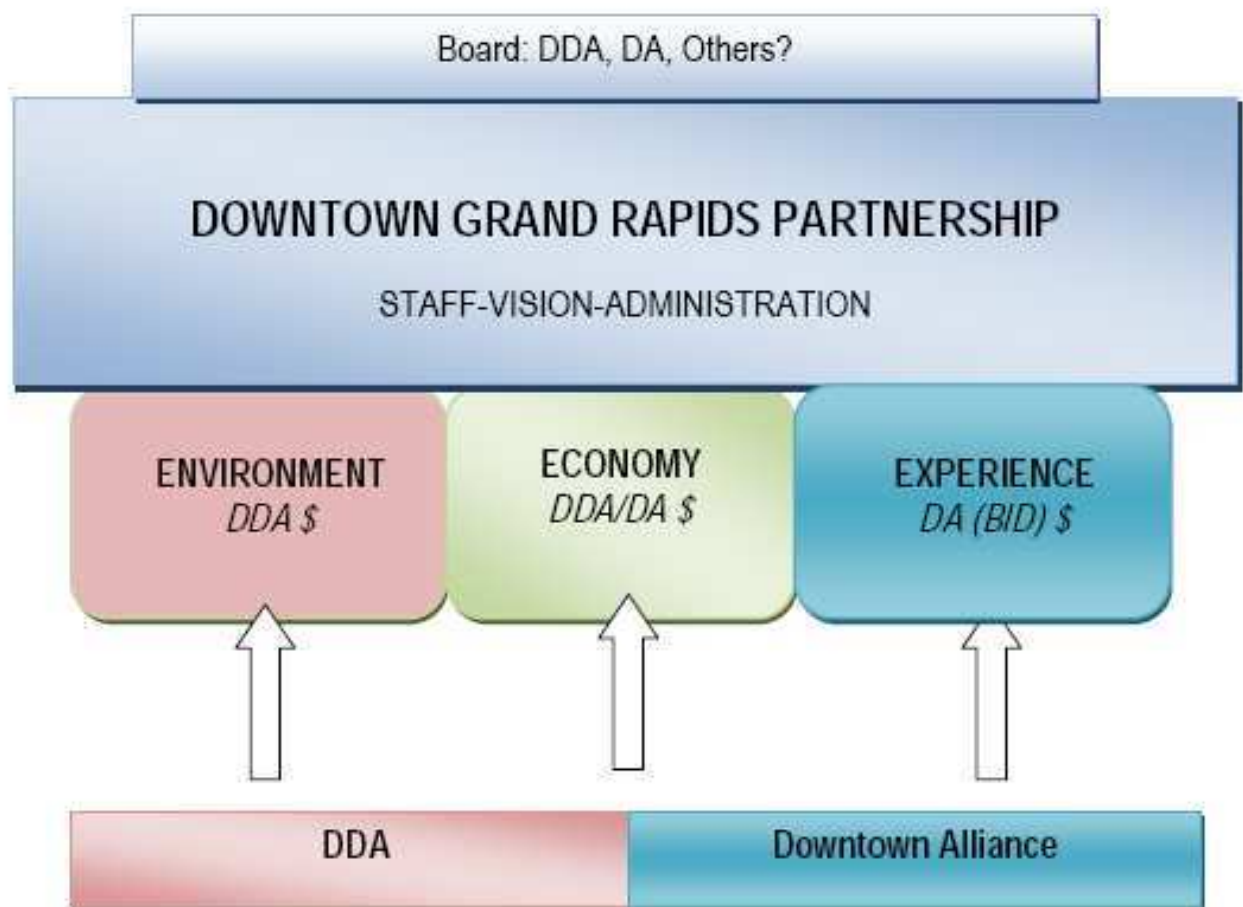
- All three of organizations utilize a holding company model that consists of several non-profit entities that come together under one downtown umbrella organization.
- All of the various component organizations are governed by their own boards.
- The component organizations all contract with the downtown organization for staff and services.
- All three organizations leverage their resources with private sector developers, employers and downtown institutions.
- All engage in a wide variety of downtown focused activities.

A matrix outlining the specifics of each of the three comparable downtown organizations is attached as Appendix C.

Starting with the DDA and the Downtown Alliance, a proposed organizational structure would include the following components.

- **DDA** revenues will continue to fund downtown development and incentives as well as most of the initiatives described in the Economy and Environment sections of this report. Some of the marketing, merchandising and retail support will be overseen and funded by both the DDA and the Downtown Alliance.
- **The Downtown Alliance** will be the management and marketing arm of the organization, providing services that are financed by downtown's assessment districts. These services include clean and safe teams, marketing and special events.
- **Downtown Grand Rapids Partnership** is the holding company that connects the various organizational parts of the new downtown management organization. The Partnership provides all staff and administrative support. It is governed by a board that consists of the officers from each of the component parts, in effect serving as the executive committee and providing the overall vision for moving downtown Grand Rapids forward.

The proposed organizational structure is illustrated below:



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FRAMING THE FUTURE: DDA 2011 PLAN

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The DDA 2010 Framework Plan invited extensive input from a variety of community stakeholders. Nearly 1,400 individuals participated in a series of group meetings and/or a community survey as part of the Framework Plan process:

Outreach Method	Participation
DDA Board of Directors: The primary client for the Framework Project, frequent meetings were held with the DDA board to update them on plan progress	The consultant team met with DDA board during each site visit.
DDA Framework Plan Steering Committee: Appointed by the DDA board, the Steering Committee was composed of 20 downtown stakeholders and was charged with general oversight of the process, community leadership and creative input to help weave the plan together	The consultant team met with the DDA Framework Steering Committee during each site visit.
Working Groups: Organized around five functional constructs of the Framework Plan, the working groups invited primary downtown stakeholders to broaden creative input into the planning process	Nearly 90 Downtown stakeholders participated in one of five working groups. Working groups met in October and December of 2010.
Community Open Houses: All downtown stakeholders were invited into the Framework process through a series of Open Houses that sought input on plan priorities.	More than 150 Downtown stakeholders participated in one of two Open Houses held in November 2010, and then 143 participated in plan review workshops held in January 2011.
Community Online Survey: All Grand Rapids area residents were invited to participate in an online survey to determine consumer preferences and priorities for improvement.	1,168 individuals participated in the online survey that was conducted from late October through mid-November 2010.

Consistent Themes: From the community outreach process, consistent themes to improve Downtown Grand Rapids included the following:

- Improving downtown retail and filling vacant storefronts emerged as a top concern from all participants, including Working Groups, Open Houses and the online survey.
- Activating the Grand River is also a top community priority for downtown, including trails and development opportunities on its banks, introducing rapids within, and connecting Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to it.
- A more walkable Downtown with alternatives to vehicles, including transit and bikes, was favored by many participants.
- Viewing downtown as a “neighborhood”, with more residential, dining, retail and services, and woven together by pedestrian-friendly streets that connect to the river and adjacent neighborhoods, emerged as a common theme.

WORKING GROUPS

Nearly 90 Downtown stakeholders participated in one of five different working groups, which were convened to brainstorm the following topics (the number of attendees is noted in parentheses):

- Vibrant Economy (15)
- Transportation (18)
- Quality Urban Design (17)
- Downtown Experience (22)
- Sustainable Future (14)

P.U.M.A. facilitated these groups through a participatory process that probed stakeholder perceptions of Downtown Grand Rapids, as well as their vision for the future of Downtown. Participants were asked to share their general impressions regarding the strengths, weaknesses, trends and opportunities that currently exist. The highlights from these discussions have been summarized in the table below:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Trends	Opportunities
River	Retail	Downtown living	Activate river
Activities/entertainment	Grocery	Mixed-use development	Affordable housing
Safe	Accessibility	Reliance on alternative modes of transportation	Public transit
Walkable/pedestrian-friendly	Green space	Thriving arts and cultural community	Business and retail development; incubator
Restaurants	Residential	Growing interest in river	Marketing/image
Progressive	River	Entrepreneurism	Embrace diversity

Working group participants were then asked to list improvements and investments that need to occur to improve Downtown. Stakeholders were asked to prioritize these items by placing dots representing energy and financial resources on priority improvements. The top three (or four in case of a tie) priorities have been summarized by category in the table below with the number of priority votes received listed in parentheses:

Vibrant Economy	Quality Urban Design	Transportation	Sustainable Future	Downtown Experience
Encourage more retail (boutique, independent, incubation) (6)	More passive and active green space; embrace recreation (7)	Regional transit system (Downtown as hub) (6)	White Water – river (5)	Fill vacancies, encourage local, independent businesses (11)
More residents/rental housing (density) (6)	Master plan for expanding river walk & park linkages (7)	Mixed use housing and retail (6)	Help support existing retail; attract new retail (5)	Activate river; land development opportunities (7)
Attract major employer, business recruitment incentives (5)	Encourage/support outdoor seating & events; expand into winter (5)	Streetcar (5)	Emphasis on education system to focus on retaining graduates (K-12) (4)	Branding of GR; develop identity (6)
Improved gateways, key connections (5)			Improve connectivity (all modes – walking, biking, trolley, etc.) (4)	More entertainment, cross-cultural activities; festivals (6)

DDA Board: A similar priority-setting meeting was held with the DDA board in October 2010. The top three priorities (with votes in parentheses) that emerged from the DDA Board Meeting include:

- Promote Downtown living/assts; broaden housing options (price points and ownership) (5)
- Improve, expand and encourage public transit system (5)
- Amenities, retail, grocery (5)

OPEN HOUSES

Priorities identified at the October Working Group meetings provided the basis for further community discussion and priority-setting at Open Houses held in early November. Each meeting began with an overview of “Global Trends Affecting Downtowns” and how these trends pertain to Downtown Grand Rapids.

Following the presentation, Downtown stakeholders were asked to visit four different stations, each addressing a different focus-area for Downtown Grand Rapids. Each station had a list of priorities/improvements regarding how the DDA might allocate its resources. Local experts were present at each station to answer questions, help foster a dialog and provide any background information necessary for participants to familiarize themselves with the four different focus areas. Participants were asked to engage in a priority setting exercise by placing dots on priorities/improvements representing their preferences as to how the DDA should allocate its energy and resources. Attendees were also encouraged to write in their own priorities and/or any comments if they felt strongly about an issue that was not already listed.

The open house on November 3rd had 72 attendees, while the open house on November 4th had 82 attendees for a total of 154 participants. As a result of the open house sessions, a concise list of priorities emerged. The top three priorities have been summarized by category in the table below with the number of priority votes received listed in parentheses:

Vibrant Economy	Quality Urban Design	Transportation	Downtown Experience
Fill empty storefronts and encourage more Downtown retail (62)	Master plan for the river (39)	Regional transit system using Downtown as a hub (34)	Bring rapids back to the river (32)
Grocery/produce store/pharmacy/full SVC/drugstore (33)	Improve trail, street and park connections, including river (23)	Improve bike infrastructure and amenities (30)	Connect to and showcase neighborhoods (23)
Support and strengthen existing businesses (32)	Design and plan for “complete streets” (17)	Streetcar (19)	More special events, cross-cultural activities and festivals (23)

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

As part of the Downtown Framework process, all community members in the Grand Rapids area were invited to participate in an online survey that probed consumer preferences and priorities for Downtown improvements. The survey was hosted on the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) homepage and a link was distributed through a variety of online channels including emails, Facebook, Twitter, individual blogs, etc. The survey was also publicized in local print and online media. The survey successfully attracted responses from 1,168 individuals, representing a wide variety of stakeholder groups. Some of the key highlights of the survey are summarized below.

Respondent Demographics: Respondents represented a wide cross-section of Grand Rapids, with more than half identifying themselves as living or working in the greater Grand Rapids area.

Profile of Survey Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Live or Work in Greater Grand Rapids	51.4%
Downtown Visitor	37.4%
Downtown Employee	28.8%
Downtown Resident	20.7%

Nearly half of respondents (45.6%) claim to have had an interest in Downtown Grand Rapids for more than 10 years. The majority of respondents were ages 25 to 49 (63.7%).

Age of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
18-24	10.6%
25-34	32.9%
35-49	30.8%
50-69	25.0%

Recent Improvements to Downtown: Over the past five years, which factors have been important in improving Downtown Grand Rapids? (# in parentheses represent % of respondents who rated these factors as “very important”)

Factors Important in Improving Downtown	Percent of Respondents
Arts and Culture	73.2%
Restaurants and Entertainment	70.8%
Festivals and Events	59.3%
Cleaner and Safer	55.3%
Shopping	40.4%
Pedestrian/Bike Friendly	40.3%
Downtown Housing	39.8%
Better Transit	34.2%
Active Green Space	29.4%

Future General Improvements: In the next five to ten years, what general improvements are important to enhance Downtown Grand Rapids? Thirteen improvement options were listed with the following viewed as “very important” by more than 45% of respondents. (# in parentheses represent % of respondents who rated these factors as “very important”)

General Improvements	Percent of Respondents
More Shopping	54.8%
Clean Up the River and Create Better Access	54.0%
More Downtown Employment	51.3%
More Convenient and Affordable Parking	50.5%
More Arts and Culture	46.8%
Better Transit	45.4%

Describe your vision for the future of Downtown Grand Rapids: Respondents were asked in an open response format to list three words to describe their vision for Downtown Grand Rapids. The following exhibit graphically displays the most prevalent responses by giving greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the responses.



Improvements to Achieve The Vision: Respondents were asked to rate a list of 15 improvements that would be important to achieve their vision for Downtown Grand Rapids. The following responses were rated as “very important” by more than 45% of respondents (# in parentheses represent % of respondents who rated these factors as “very important”).

Actions	Percent of Respondents
Encourage the Arts, Including Public Art and Cultural Facilities	54.6%
Improve Shopping Selection	53.5%
Create Recreational Opportunities and Better Access to the Grand River	51.6%
Encourage Mixed-Use Development	50.7%
Clean Up the Grand River	49.2%
Create a Cohesive Downtown Strategic Plan	46.5%
Improve Parking Accessibility and Affordability	45.5%

Priority Improvements: Respondents were then asked to select the ONE improvement that would be most valuable as Downtown moves forward.

ONE Most Valuable Action	Percent of Respondents
Improve Shopping Selection	22.8%
Create a Cohesive Downtown Strategic Plan	12.4%
Clean Up the River and Create Better Access	10.6%
Improve Parking Accessibility & Affordability	9.1%
Encourage Art and Culture	8.0%
More Pedestrian/Bike Friendly	7.9%
Better Transit	7.8%
Marketing, Public Relations and Events	6.4%
Increase Residential Development	5.8%
Improve Safety	3.2%
Beautification to Enhance Ped Environment	2.5%
Improve Communications Between Public & Private Sectors	2.1%
Increase Active Green Space	1.5%

Open-Ended Suggestions: If you could suggest one improvement to enhance the OVERALL experience of visiting Downtown Grand Rapids, what would it be?



On the open-ended responses for improving downtown, parking was cited most frequently. Concerns and suggestions for parking included:

- Need to make parking more accessible and convenient
- Parking cost is too high, would like to see free parking
- Increase the frequency of shuttles to parking areas
- Improve wayfinding and signage to locate parking
- Consider occasional free parking promotions

Survey Cross-Tabulations

Survey cross-tabulations by the age of respondent reveal differing priorities for the ONE action that is most valuable to improve downtown. All age groups agree that Improving Shopping Selection is the Number One priority, but other top priorities differ:

Priority	Age 18 to 24	Age 25 to 34	Age 35 to 49	Age 50 to 69
1	Improve Shopping Selection	Improve Shopping Selection	Improve Shopping Selection	Improve Shopping Selection
2	Encourage Art & Culture	Downtown Strategic Plan	Improve the River	Downtown Strategic Plan
3	Better Transit	Improve the River	Downtown Strategic Plan	Increase Residential
4	Pedestrian/Bike Friendly	Improve Parking	Improve Parking	Build a Positive Identity
5	Downtown Strategic Plan	Encourage Art & Culture	Encourage Art & Culture	Pedestrian/Bike Friendly

Assessment of Existing Conditions

Summary of Economic Indicators

Demographics

- Since 2000, downtown households and population have increased in comparison to the City of Grand Rapids where households, population and household size have decreased.
- The median income of downtown households increased by almost 22% since 2000, compared to a 1.1% increase for City households.
- In 2009, downtown households reported less income (\$32,681) than all City households (\$37,625).
- Downtown per capita income was \$20,543 compared to \$18,913 for all City residents in 2009.
- The 2009 median age of downtown residents (30.4), compared to all City residents (31.8) may be a contributing factor to the household income gap.

Education

- More than 31,000 students attend five public institutions of higher learning in downtown Grand Rapids.

Office

- The downtown Grand Rapids office market accounts for more than one-third of the region.
- \$1 billion in investment in new medical and healthcare facilities is under construction or has been recently completed along the Michigan Street Life Sciences Corridor.
- Vacancy rates have increased since 2007 to 19.4% during 2009, even as commercial space has been taken off the market for other uses.
- The top two employers that are headquartered in downtown are in the medical industry, employing more than 8,500 of downtown's 36,000 employees.

Retail

- Available retail space in downtown ranges from \$9.82/sf for traditional retail space to \$23.50/sf for space in new construction. Most space leases between \$12.00/sf and \$18.00/sf.
- Downtown has 170 traditional retail and services businesses are located at street level and in hotels.
- Very few national chain businesses are located in downtown.

Housing

- Downtown's fourth quarter 2009 occupancy rates (97.4%) and average monthly rental rates (\$836.75) were the highest in the total Grand Rapids market
- Since 2000, more than 1,700 housing units have been added to the downtown market

Downtown Grand Rapids Housing Construction Trends: 2000 – 2010*



*no residential units built during 2003

Downtown Grand Rapids Housing Sales Trends: September 2009 - September 2010

	Heartside - Downtown	City of Grand Rapids
Median Sales Price September 2010	\$156,750	\$88,000
% Change from September 2009	+21.2%	-4.0%
% Change from September 2005	-30.3%	-27.3%
Foreclosure Listings October 2010	1	1,719

Hospitality

- More than 2.5 million visits were reported to downtown Grand Rapids cultural facilities during 2009.

Safety

- An elevated density of violent crime occurred along the Division Avenue corridor south of East Fulton Street during 2009.

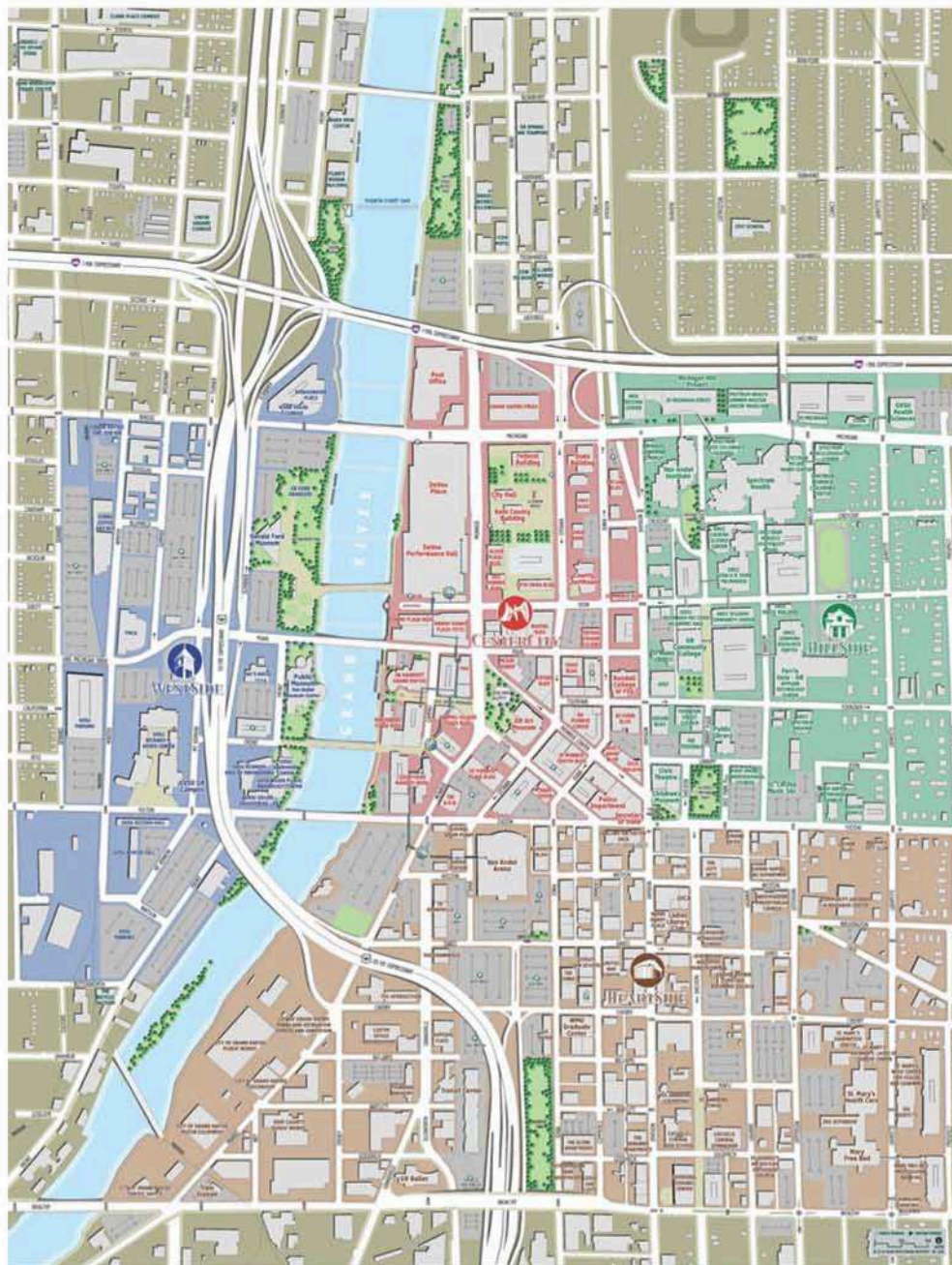
Assessment of Existing Conditions

Background

West Michigan's Grand River Valley was occupied by Native American people through the early 1800s, followed by European fur traders who settled and became self-governing in 1836. The City of Grand Rapids was established in 1850, becoming well known as the nation's "Furniture Capital" for its craftsmen, carpenters and woodworkers during a lumber boom in the 1880s. Forty-four furniture companies existed in Grand Rapids at the height of the lumber boom. Grand Rapids is currently known as the "Furniture Capital" for office furniture manufacturing and design and as a center for manufacturing, bioscience, education, healthcare, social services, government and retail trade.

Downtown Grand Rapids

Downtown's districts include Center City which is surrounded by Monroe North on the north, Hillside/Medical District on the east, Heartside on the south, and the West Grand/West Side districts on the west.



Demographics

2010 population for the Grand Rapids' metropolitan area is over 1.3 million, and the City of Grand Rapids population is 192,435. During 2009, an estimated 17,372 persons lived in more than 8,300 households within a one-mile radius of downtown Grand Rapids. Nearly 8,500 households are forecast for downtown by the year 2014.

In the City of Grand Rapids, households, population and household size decreased between 2000 and 2009. In 2009, the median age for downtown residents was younger than that of City as a whole. The downtown area experienced significant income growth in conjunction with household growth since 2000. Although downtown household incomes were lower than that of the City, downtown per capita income was higher than that of the City.

Downtown Grand Rapids Demographics: 2000 - 2009

	Downtown		City of Grand Rapids	
	2009	% Change from 2000	2009	% Change from 2000
Population	17,372	+1.5%	193,707	-2.1%
Households	8,347	+1.2%	72,593	-0.8%
Average Household Size	2.08	n/a	2.55	-0.8%
Median Age	30.4	n/a	31.8	+4.6%
Median Household Income	\$32,681	+21.7%	\$37,625	+1.1%
Per Capita Income	\$20,543	+22.3%	\$18,913	+7.1%

n/a - not available

Education

27.6% of downtown residents 25 years of age or older have attained at least a Bachelor's degree, compared to a national average of 28%. More than 31,000 students attend five public institutions of higher learning in downtown Grand Rapids. Two of those facilities offer curriculums that focus on health care and life sciences. A private high school serves 800 students within the downtown area. Other downtown schools offer youth and adult vocational and technical training, visual arts and design training, and workforce training to a diverse population of attendees.

sources: U.S. Census, ESRI, The Right Place

Office



Downtown Grand Rapids accounts for more than one-third of the office market of the West Michigan region. The region experienced negative absorption of 64,879 square feet during 2009. Over the last 15 years, downtown's new construction and historic renovations have generated more than \$2.5 billion of investment including \$183 million in green and LEED buildings. As the center of culture, arts, sports and entertainment, downtown Grand Rapids is also the region's medical research, healthcare and major commerce center.

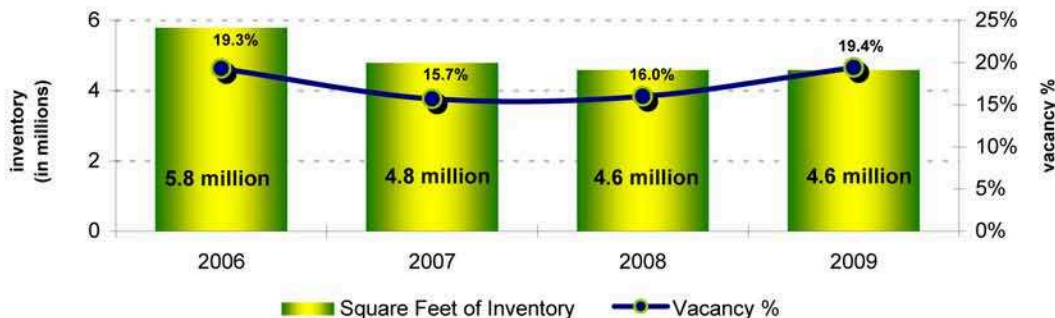
Downtown Grand Rapids Office Market Overview: First Quarter 2010*

	Total Inventory	Vacancy Rate	Net Absorption	Class "A" Rate	
				CBD	Downtown
Downtown Grand Rapids	4,608,939 sf	19.2%	(49,096) sf	\$20.34	\$23.90
West Michigan Region	13,630,919 sf	20.7%	(94,963) sf	\$21.07	

*includes buildings with at least 20,000 sf in the Downtown and CBD submarkets; owner-occupied, government and medical (occupied by owner) buildings are not included
statistics are preliminary

Downtown Grand Rapids Office Real Estate Trends: 2006 - 2009

\$1 billion in investment in new medical and healthcare facilities is under construction or has been recently completed along the Michigan Street Life Sciences Corridor. Over 9.4% of the office market is comprised of leased medical-related space. Even as new medical space was added to downtown, many historic commercial buildings have undergone renovation to mixed-use and residential projects. Vacancy rates have increased by 23.6% since 2007, even as commercial space has been taken off the market for residential, institutional and other uses. Between 2006 and 2009, Class A full service office lease rates remained at around \$21.00 per square foot per year.



Major Employers

The top two employers that are headquartered in downtown are in the medical industry, employing over 8,500. Together, these companies employ over 19,700.

Company Headquarters	Type of Business	Downtown Employment
Spectrum Health	hospital and medical care	6,000
Saint Mary's Health Care	hospital and medical care	2,585
Kent County	government	1,973
Fifth Third Bank	banking and financial services	1,827
City of Grand Rapids	government	1,564
U.S. Postal Service	postal service	1,532
Grand Rapids Community College	college	1,273
Amway Hotel Corporation	hotels and restaurants	1,076
Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation	rehabilitation services	752
The Grand Rapids Press	newspaper	555
Van Andel Institute	biomedical research and education	300
Blue Cross Blue Shield	healthcare insurance	263

Workforce

More than 36,000 people were employed in downtown Grand Rapids in 2009. Recent estimates show that 57% are employed in white collar jobs, 19% are employed in service jobs and 24% of the workforce is employed in blue collar jobs. The metropolitan area's unemployment rate grew from 11.1% in March 2009 to 12.8% in March 2010. Statewide, unemployment rose from 12.6% to 14.1% for the same period.

Downtown's Business Districts

Arena Zone - Home to the Van Andel Arena, the area is an entertainment district.

Avenue of the Arts - An emerging corridor that celebrates the arts. This renovated area has become home to affordable artist lofts and unique live/work spaces.

East Fulton - A traditional business district located between three regional medical centers and several major cultural organizations.

Grandville Avenue - Significant redevelopments of entertainment and living spaces and home to the Transit Center and the Grand Rapids Ballet Company.

Monroe Center - Boutiques, restaurants and coffee shops, the Grand Rapids Art Museum and unique programming at the adjacent Rosa Parks Circle.

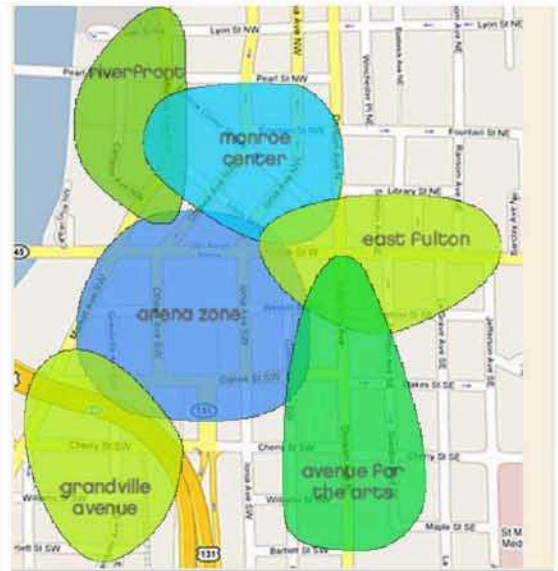
Riverfront - Site of Grand Rapids' convention center and three major hotels, the area offers classic arts, entertainment, and restaurants.

Commercial Space for Lease



Retail building on Fulton Street SE

Available retail space in Downtown Grand Rapids ranged from \$9.82 to \$23.50 per square foot per year *during October 2010*. Most space leases between \$12.00/sf and



\$18.00/sf. Traditional retail space, i.e. older buildings that were built specifically for retail uses, exists alongside retail spaces that are housed in recently renovated historic buildings and newly built projects, some of which also contain residential, service and office uses. Some of the available units are marketed as retail or office use. Eleven retail spaces are available in the **Arena Zone**, with ground floor space ranging from 1,300 sf to 10,000 sf. Rooftop entertainment/garden uses are suggested in both a recent renovation of a historic building and a newly-constructed building. Lease rates are \$12.50/sf within the heart of the district (Ionia Avenue) and \$19.00/sf at the periphery.

Three retail spaces ranging in size from 1,775 sf to 4,280 sf are available along the northernmost block of Division Avenue in the **Avenue of the Arts** district. The spaces are situated at the edge of the East Fulton district, and lease rates range from \$10.00/sf to \$23.50/sf for a space in a newly-constructed residential project.

Five available retail spaces are located in historic buildings in the **East Fulton** business district. The units range in size from 900 sf to 4,254 sf and in some instances, suites can be combined. The lease rate range is from \$9.82/sf to \$16.50/sf.

The **Grandville Avenue** district offers seven available retail spaces ranging in size from 960 sf to 8,000 sf in recently renovated buildings and a contemporary, loft-style building. Lease rates range from \$14.00/sf to \$18.00/sf.

Monroe Center is a traditional shopping district with seven available retail spaces ranging from 2,198 sf to 5,950 sf. Lease rates range from \$10.00/sf for a former market space on Monroe Center to \$19.00/sf for two retail spaces in the planned renovation of the historic Flat Iron building.

Five retail spaces ranging from 1,097sf to 3,978sf are located in the **Riverfront** district. Lease rates range from \$17.75/sf for a space in a renovated older commercial building to \$20.00/sf in modern commercial buildings.

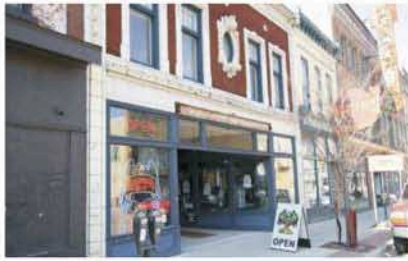
Commercial Space for Lease, October 2010

Property Address/District	Type of Space	Number of Units Available	Square Foot Range	Rent/Square Foot Range
Arena Zone				
38 Commerce Ave. SW	retail	3	2,200 – 3,900	\$14 - \$16
	office	5	6,000 – 9,000	\$15 - \$16
47 Commerce Ave. SW	retail	1	10,000	\$15
44 Ionia Ave. SW	retail	4	1,800 – 4,100	\$12.50 - \$14.50
50 Louis St. NW	retail	2	1,300 – 5,974	\$15 - \$19
	office	5	1,300 – 10,700	\$10 - \$14
32 Market Ave. SW	retail	1	2,692	\$17.50
	office	1	1,310	\$17.50
Avenue of the Arts/Division Avenue				
25 Division Ave. S	retail	1	4,280	\$10.74
	office	8	1,499 – 7,993	\$15.34-\$19.82
101 Division Ave. S	retail	1	1,775	\$10
	office	2	1,775 – 3,550	\$10
1 Division Ave.	retail	1	2,160	\$23.50
East Fulton				
210 East Fulton St. SE	retail	1	4,254	\$11
6 & 8 Jefferson Ave. SE	retail	2	1,100 – 2,200	\$9.82 - \$10.36 gross
9 & 11 Jefferson Ave. SE	retail	2	900 – 2,900	\$16.50 gross
148 East Fulton St. SE	office	2	7,400 – 14,800	\$7.35 - \$10
Grandville Avenue				
206-208 Grandville Ave. SW	retail	2	3,644 – 7,641	\$14
	office	5	1,500 – 8,121	\$12
212 Grandville Ave. SW	retail	4	960 – 6,955	\$16.50 - \$18
217 Grandville Ave. SW	retail/office	2	4,370 – 8,000	\$16 - \$18
Monroe Center				
40 Monroe Center NW	retail	divisible	5,853	n/a
52 Monroe Center NW	retail	1	3,100	\$10
83 Monroe Center NW	retail	1	3,044	\$18
100 Monroe Center NW	retail	2	2,200 – 3,800	\$19
	office	9	7,390 – 23,790	\$12 - \$17
125 Ottawa St.	retail	1	2,198	n/a
29 Pearl St. NW	retail	2	2,985 – 5,950	\$12.50 - \$14.00
Riverfront				
169 Louis Campau Promenade SW	retail	2	1,989 – 3,987	\$16 modified gross
99 Monroe Ave. NW	retail	1	6,918	n/a
169 Monroe Ave. NW	retail	1	3,069	\$20
180 Monroe Ave. NW	retail	1	1,097	\$17.75

n/a – not available
rents per square foot are NNN unless otherwise noted

sources: Grubb & Ellis, CB Richard Ellis, Downtown Grand Rapids, ESRI, Bureau of Labor Statistics, The Right Place

Downtown Retail



170 retail and service businesses are located at street level and in hotels in downtown's six business districts. A recent inventory revealed that the number of businesses decreased by 15% from the prior period. Most retail options include independently owned apparel, sporting goods, bookstores, restaurants, bars and service retail. Few national chain businesses are located in downtown; these are represented by Starbucks, Fedex/Kinko's, Jimmy John's, Subway and Quizno's.

Existing Retail in Downtown Grand Rapids

	Number of Businesses
Food and Beverage Stores	4
Eating and Drinking Places	98
Home Furnishings/Furniture	1
Apparel and Accessories/Services	19
Sporting Goods	4
Books/ Music/Games/Toys	10
Health/Personal Care/Fitness	23
Art Galleries and Framing	5
Florists/Gifts	4
Office Supplies	2

Grand Rapids Area Retail

During fourth quarter 2009 the total Grand Rapids market of 17.1 million square feet experienced a 12.6% vacancy rate, increasing from 8.7% during fourth quarter 2008. Much of this increase is attributable to suburban big box retailers such as Circuit City and Linens N' Things closing their doors. Downtown Grand Rapids is not considered its own submarket, however a category of "urban retail" is included for reporting purposes, as part of the overall inventory*. This recently added category is not fully representative of downtown Grand Rapids retail, but can begin to illustrate trends for the area.

Urban Retail Trends*: 4th Qtr. 2008 - 4th Qtr. 2009

	4 th Qtr. 2008	4 th Qtr. 2009
Total Square Feet	48,989 sf	48,989 sf
Vacant Square Feet	10,820 sf	9,825 sf
Vacancy Rate	22.1%	20.1%
Net Absorption (YTD)	(10,100) sf	995 sf

**multi-tenant, single-tenant and owner-occupied buildings with at least 5000sf*

sources: Downtown Grand Rapids, Grubb & Ellis

Housing



Approximately 3,000 housing units are located within the DDA boundary, representing 4% of total housing units in the City of Grand Rapids in 2009. Since 2000, more than 1,700 units have been added to the downtown market; 800 of those units are for rent and 350 are in new construction projects vs. renovations. Roughly 430 downtown rental units built since 2000 are subsidized/affordable, or are student housing. In some instances, former new condominium projects have been leasing units, an indication of the current economic climate.

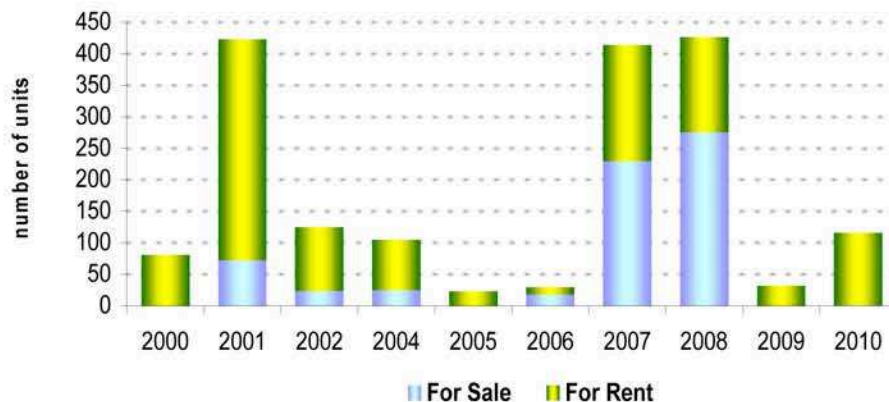
Downtown's fourth quarter 2009 occupancy rates (97.4%)

and average monthly rental rates (\$836.75) were the highest in the total Grand Rapids market*.

*statistics do not include subsidized/affordable or student housing

Several districts in downtown Grand Rapids are considered to be Renaissance Zones, or areas that the City has targeted to incentivize investment. These Zones are virtually tax free for businesses or residents presently in, or moving into. The majority of properties in Renaissance Zones are used commercially; however residential units benefit from the R2 designation. To date nearly \$362.9 million in residential and/or residential/mixed use development investment has occurred in downtown†.

Downtown Grand Rapids Housing Construction Trends: 2000 – 2010*



*no residential units built during 2003

A snapshot of housing sales activity for downtown and the City of Grand Rapids follows. The median sales price for homes in Heartside was \$156,750, representing an increase of 21.2% compared to the prior year. Sales prices have depreciated 30.3% over the last five years. The median sales price for a home in Heartside is 78.1% higher than the median sales price for the City of Grand Rapids.

Downtown Grand Rapids Housing Sales Trends: September 2009 - September 2010

	Heartside - Downtown	City of Grand Rapids
Median Sales Price September 2010*	\$156,750	\$88,000
% Change from September 2009	+21.2%	-4.0%
% Change from September 2005	-30.3%	-27.3%
Number of Sales**	16	3,203
Foreclosure Listings October 2010***	1	1,719



*data reflects the period July 10 to September 10 2010

**residential sales made during the previous nine months according to public record

*** includes properties in the pre-foreclosure, auction, and bank-owned stages of the foreclosure process

sources: CB Richard Ellis, rapidgrowthmedia.com†, Claritas, U.S. Census, trulia.com

Hospitality and Tourism

Downtown Grand Rapids' hospitality infrastructure now includes a new JW Marriott hotel that links via skywalk to two other hotels, the convention center and performance hall, and the Arena District and its nightclubs, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Hotels

Downtown's 1,400 hotel rooms averaged a 47.6% occupancy rate during 2009, a decrease of 20.4% over 2007. The average hotel room rate increased by 5.1% during the same period. The State of Michigan continues to have the lowest occupancy in the country, however, year-to-date September 2010 statistics are twice the growth nationally and the best in Michigan. 28 additional rooms are planned for the downtown market with the renovation of the Fox Building as the City Flats Hotel.

Downtown Grand Rapids Hotel Trends: 2007 - 2009

	2007	2008	2009	YTD September 2010	% Change 2007 - 2009
Occupancy	59.8%	49.4%	47.6%	54.8%	-20.4%
Average Room Rate	\$123.40	\$130.60	\$129.67	\$130.59	+5.1%
RevPar	\$73.77	\$64.56	\$61.76	\$71.30	-16.3%

Arts, Culture and /Entertainment



Attractions

Downtown Grand Rapids has a wide variety of cultural institutions where visitors and residents can experience such things as ballet, Broadway theatre, professional hockey, football, and baseball events; top tier concerts at the 12,000 seat Van Andel Arena; and the four major museums including the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, the Grand Rapids Children's Museum, the Grand Rapids Public Museum and the Grand Rapids Art Museum, the first newly-constructed Gold LEED-certified art museum in the world.

Cultural Facility/Attraction Visitor Attendance*: 2009

Cultural Facility/Attraction	Visitor Attendance
Van Andel Arena**	567,846
DeVos Place** (includes DeVos Performance Hall)	561,580
Grand Rapids Public Library**	490,103
Grand Rapids Public Museum**	265,068
Grand Rapids Children's Museum**	160,700
Grand Rapids Art Museum**	138,846
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum**	116,074
Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts	114,396
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre	59,774
Grand Rapids Ballet Company	38,260
St. Cecilia Music Center	n/a

*includes audiences and other programming

**fiscal year 2009

n/a- not available

Downtown is home to Kendall College, one of the nation's most influential colleges of art & design, and the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Michigan's largest multi-disciplinary contemporary arts center. UICA offers cutting-edge programming in visual arts, performance art, literature, film, music and dance, and its Film Theatre is downtown's only cinema.

sources: Experience Grand Rapids, cultural facilities

Public Art



Alexander Calder's "La Grande Vitesse" was installed at Vandenberg Plaza in June 1969. The project began in 1967 when the National Endowment for the Arts awarded the city its first grant for Art in Public Spaces. With no previous model to follow, Grand Rapids essentially wrote the book on funding public art through partnerships that united public agencies and private organizations, becoming the case study for future installations after the NEA declared the project the most successful of its kind in the United States.

Maya Lin's "Ecliptic" at Rosa Parks Circle is Lin's first piece to combine art and architecture, as its centerpiece is a 13,000 square-foot oval amphitheater that converts into an ice skating rink in the winter. But the Ecliptic has not only dramatically improved the design aesthetic of Rosa Parks Circle and attracted more people to the area. The installation of the work also has helped to spur an increase in redevelopment along Monroe Center, including the decision by the Grand Rapids Art Museum to build its new location adjacent to the park. Nearly 100 sculptures by internationally renowned artists are located in downtown Grand Rapids.

Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism is an important part of Downtown Grand Rapids' tourism industry. Downtown is home to Michigan's only AAA-Five Diamond Restaurant and the Secchia Institute for Culinary Education, which ranks among the top twenty schools nationally for culinary skills development. Annual events including Restaurant Week feature many of Downtown's restaurants. Independent dining establishments including tapas bistros, seafood houses, ethnic specialty restaurants and restaurants serve fresh, organic produce and local farm-to-table cuisine, offering many dining options. The International Wine and Food Festival celebrates Grand Rapids best restaurants and beverages from around the world.

ArtPrize



ArtPrize is the world's largest prize for art that is decided by the public's vote. The 2010 event featured more than 1,700 artists' works displayed in mostly downtown venues that ranged from local businesses to art galleries and public spaces. The top art prize of \$250,000 was awarded to the winner; an additional \$199,000 was awarded to the top nine artists. The 2010 event had an estimated economic impact of \$7 million, drawing as many as 400,000 visitors during the 19-day event.

Festivals and Events

Other festivals and events that take place in downtown Grand Rapids include the Festival of the Arts and the Annual Celebration on the Grand. Flash mob events such as zombie walks, a pillow fight, a water balloon fight, a water slide and a "chalk flood" of sidewalk drawings by children, artists and others have occurred since 2008, drawing dozens to thousands of participants to downtown.

Safety

The Grand Rapids statistical neighborhood of Heartside encompasses downtown's Center City and Heartside districts. During 2009, a total of 1,617 crimes were reported in the Heartside neighborhood. 27.5% of those crimes were considered violent, (i.e. homicide, aggravated assault, rape) 36.0% were property crimes (burglary, theft, arson), and 36.5% of other crimes (nuisance crimes) were reported.

Citywide in 2009, 21,683 total crimes were reported, with 29% of crimes committed against persons, 47.2% against property and 33.3% were other crimes. Overall, the City of Grand Rapids experienced a 6.6% decrease in Part One crime in 2009 in comparison to 2008. The City experienced a 3.2% decrease in Part Two crime in the same time period.



Heartside Neighborhood Boundary

Grand Rapids, MI - Inspirational Downtown Organization Models

(Prepared by Progressive Urban Management Associates, 12/10)

Organization Structure/Boards	Focus & Programs Mission	Partners Sources of Funding	Accomplishments
<p>Memphis City Center Commission downtownmemphis.com 5 distinct entities each with its own board: BID, DDC, Parking, Finance & Incentives and Design review board <i>Annual Budget \$1.7M</i></p>	<p>A multi-faceted organization that acts as a public interest developer, provides incentives and loans to encourage new investment, provides research & data to attract new development, recommends and coordinates public improvements, manages a multi-faceted downtown marketing and communications efforts, operates and manages parking structures, and encourages residential development and other strategies to strengthen the CBD</p> <p>Mission: <i>To improve the economy of Memphis & Shelby County by coordinating an aggressive public/private program to promote the redevelopment and economic growth of the Central Business District referred to as "Downtown"</i></p>	<p>LISC City County Business owners Commercial property owners Residents Private developers <i>BID assessments</i> <i>Fundraising</i> <i>Development fees</i> <i>TIF</i> <i>Federal stimulus \$</i> <i>Parking revenues</i></p>	<p>\$5B invested in the CBD since 1998 through catalyst role of CCC in planning, land assembly, financing and construction; Strategically using parking investment to spark economic development; 23,000 downtown residents; Actively recruits diversity in CCC boards and leadership - Increased minority participation by 20% in 5 years</p>
<p>Downtown Ft. Worth Inc. dfwi.org 501(c)(6) 11 TIF Districts Downtown PID DT Ft. Worth Initiatives, Inc (501)(c)(3) <i>Annual Budget: \$6M</i></p>	<p>TIF funds generally support Project-specific investment in downtown including façade renovations, reimbursement to private developers for public improvements and streetscape renovations and parking structure leases. PID assessment generally fund clean and safe, maintenance, marketing and promotions, transportation, parking and planning efforts. DWFLI funds housing development, community festivals and park management</p> <p>Mission: <i>To assist in making the Central Business District a vibrant, healthy and attractive center in which to work, live and visit</i></p>	<p>330 block PID (est. 1986) TIF TMA <i>PID assessment</i> <i>TIF</i> <i>Sponsorships</i> <i>Grants</i> <i>Memberships</i></p>	<p>Building permits increased 15% 1st Q 2010 over 1st Q 2009 Office rental rates are strong Apartment occupancy rates DT 96%; rents increased over 2009 2010 hotel occupancy 20% above national average Retail occupancy is 97% TIF funding underwrites \$3M in annual parking leases; generates \$60M in retail sales</p>
<p>Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. downtownkalamazoo.org 501(c)(6) 4 distinct entities, each with its own board: Downtown Tomorrow Inc (real estate development & fundraising; about \$8M in holdings) DT Kalamazoo Association Charities DDA <i>Annual Budget: \$3.5M</i></p>	<p>Real Estate Development Business Recruitment Clean & Safe Marketing Manage all downtown public parking lots Capital Improvement Committee Citizens Advisory Committee Project review Committee Events Mission: <i>The promise of Downtown is to be a focal point for a distinctive sense of community, forming the foundation for educational, economic and personal success for all.</i></p>	<p>Private Developers Police Department Neighborhood Organizations SBOTC Universities, Colleges Hospitals <i>TIF</i> <i>2 mil assessment</i> <i>Development fees</i> <i>Fundraising</i></p>	<p>Concentrating on 6 Transformative Projects: Historic building rehab; Redevelopment projects; Arena and mixed use development; Working with colleges and hospitals to develop bio medical research campus; bringing new medical school downtown; Downtown parking; Downtown marketing and branding campaign; new website; event production & management; Business Recruitment and Retention Program; Building Revitalization Program; Retail Incubation Program; \$1.2M site improvements for Center Redevelopment Project; \$30K new streetscape; 20 new bike racks; Traffic control and pedestrian safety improvements; funding the full-time community police officer; horse patrols; lighting improvements and video surveillance cameras.</p>

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